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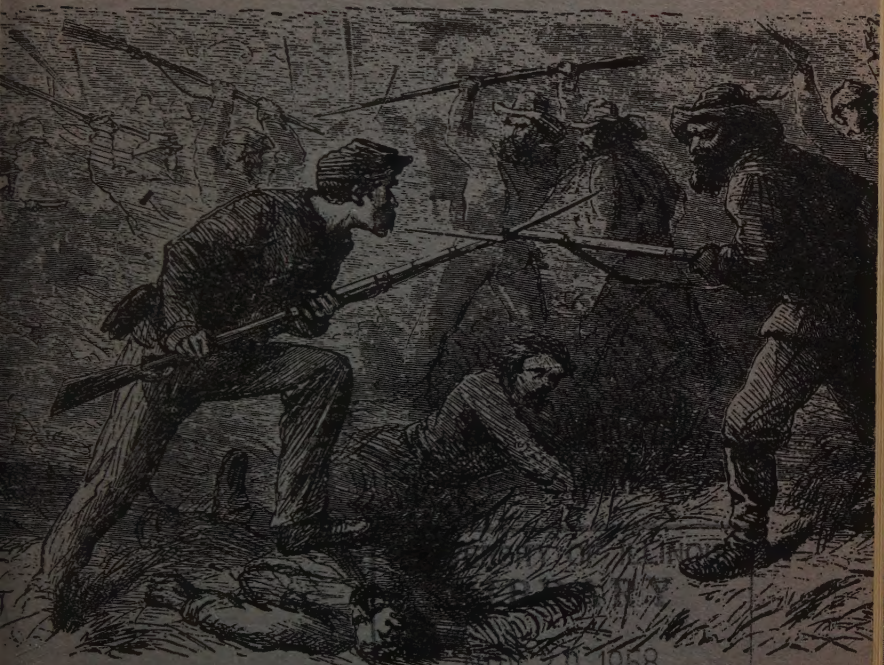

BAYONET FIGHT AT FRAZIER'S FARM.

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AN EPIC OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR BY JOHN NIST

DULCE ET DECORUM

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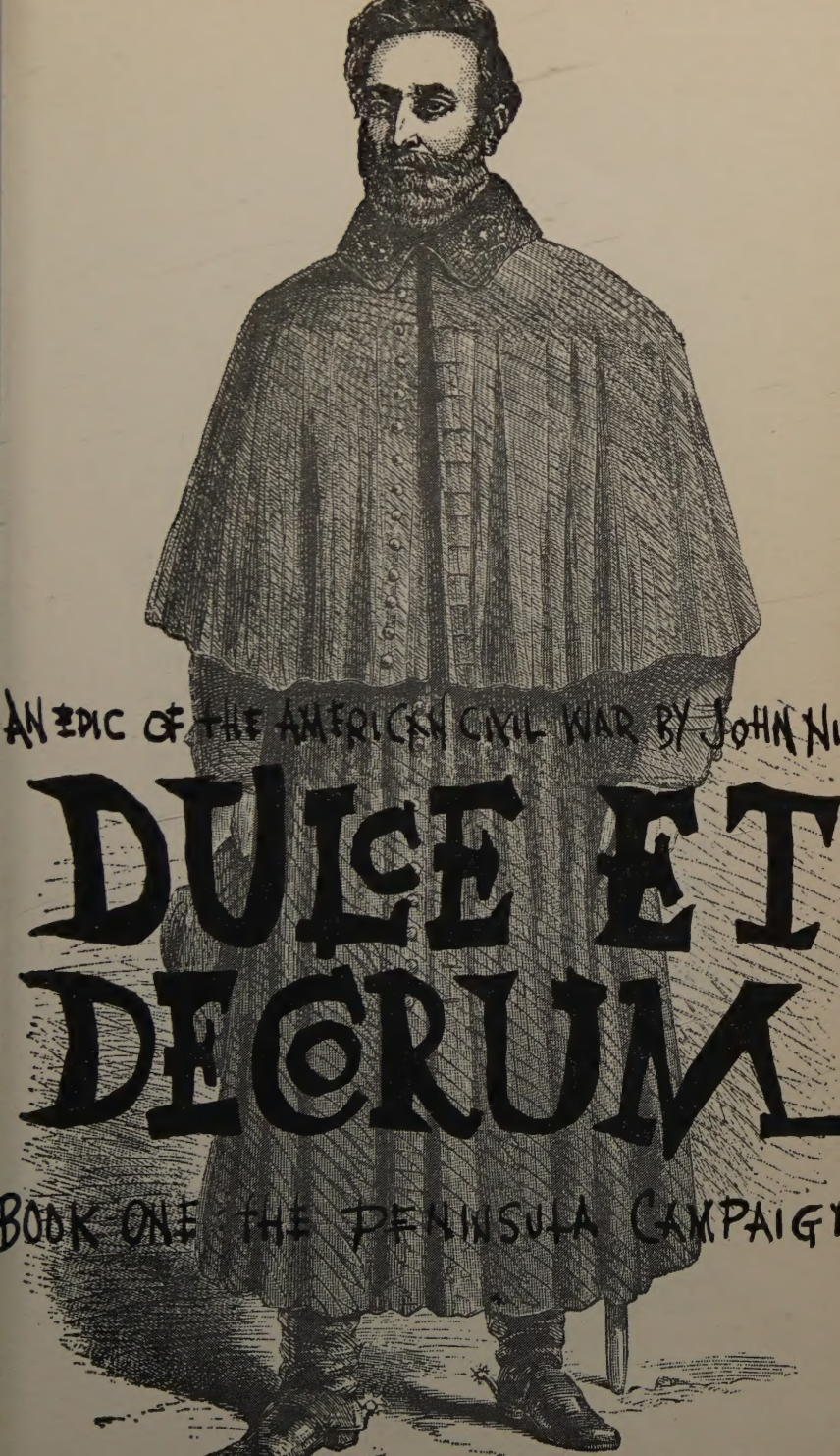
AN EPIC OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR BY JOHN NI
DULCE ET
DECORUM
BOOK ONE THE PENINSULA CAMPAIGN

Note

For the first time in its history, the *Journal* here presents a double issue. It is devoted entirely to the first book of a projected five-book Civil War epic by John Nist to be entitled DULCE ET DECORUM. The work, still in progress, takes the form of a detailed battle biography of Stonewall Jackson and some of the men under his command. Though the section we offer deals only with one aspect of the Peninsula Campaign, we feel that it is capable of standing as an entity unto itself. In all fairness to the author, however, we ask that it also be considered as part of a larger work.

The Editors

Dulce et Decorum

INVOCATION

This is the story of a general and his men,
The story of a corps of rockribbed ragamuffins,
Besieged by dysentery, infested with lice,
Feverish in swampland and shivering in snow;
A corps of scarecrow heroes, in homespun gray
And butternut sash, choking on August dust,
Drowning in September rain, leathered in sun
And wind, gallburned with sweat; a corps
Of singing sinners and swearing saints,
Footsore and saddlesore from following the stars
Stitched to the collar of their bearded prophet
Of attack—Professor Tom Fool, a tactical genius
Without tact, sanity with a madman's penchant
For calloused knees and secrecy, night rides
And morning prayers, cold packs on the stomach
Of dyspepsia and a lemon at the lips of command.
This is the story of a general and his men,
A story that no pagan goddess of poetry

Or heathen muse of history can inspire,
For the ordered world of classical restraint
Is alien to Gothic grotesque and the perfect
Proportion of Grecian beauty unreconciled
With hypochondria and sanctity, merciless
Fury and charity, blood and the God of peace.
And so I ask The Spirit Who moves in tongues
Of flame to bless my song with The Word of truth
That is never any denial of love
And to whisper me plain how the risen Christ,
Who walks the waters of each broken heart,
Once led this iron-gaunt general and his men
Through fire-torn fields in a famous war
Between brother and brother to within four hours
Of shattering the American dream of liberty
And equality on a warm spring day when dogwood
Bloomed along every road into Chancellorsville—
And then abandoned the Southern Cromwell to a night
Of self-betrayal and the wounds of crucifixion
That the human soul might come to understand
How the Will of God is not the will of man
And how the Lord may answer every plea,
Though many times say no in accent unmistakable.
Such was the answer to a nation in error
When a clock stopped at three-fifteen
On a Sunday afternoon in a little frame house
At Guiney's Station and Stonewall Jackson died.

PROLOGUE

1. Victory In The Valley

"If this Valley is lost, Virginia is lost."
So spoke the general who defied belief, the grim
Warring deacon with his nervous stomach, cold feet,
And curious meals: raspberries, milk and bread.
But he saved the Shenandoah for a time,
And Virginia for a time, and the South for a time,
Having been taught by religion to feel
As safe in the field as he did in bed:
"God has fixed the time for my death.
I do not concern myself about that."
Yet through the spring of 1862 he did
Concern himself with Fremont, Banks, Shields,
And McDowell in battles as brilliant as those
Of Napoleon: Front Royal, Winchester, Cross Keys,
Port Republic—to say nothing of the slaughter
Of 2,000 novice Yank cavalrymen, who died
Strapped to their saddles, their horses kicking
In harness while the snakes of their guts
Writhed red and blue in the dying sun—
A sight to make Kyd Douglas vomit and set
A mask of tight-lipped triumph on Jackson's face.
Yes, by any standard apart from love,
The Valley Campaign was something miraculous.
Consider the facts: 48 days of marching
To cover 676 miles; five pitched engagements,
With never more than 17,000 to face an enemy
In aggregate four times that number.
And the results: the saving of Richmond;
The tying down of 175,000 Federals from
McClellan's encirclement of the Confederate
Capital; the counting of 3,500 enemy prisoners,
3,500 enemy dead; the capturing of 10,000 muskets
And rifles, nine precious cannon, and mountains
Of supplies. Against these figures, the losses
Seem slight: 2,500 dead and wounded, 600 prisoners,

Three guns. But what seems slight on a sheet of
Statistics may be infinite in the hearts of widows
And orphans, and the casualties had only begun.

2. The General

Who fashioned the victory in the Valley?
What was he like? His passport description
For a widower's tour of Europe in 1856 reads
As follows: "Stature 5 feet 9 and three-quarter
Inches; English; forehead full, eyes gray, nose
Aquiline, mouth small; chin oval; hair dark brown;
Face oval, complexion dark." And biographers
Assert that he then weighed about 175 pounds.
But the picture is static, frozen; the man,
Dynamic, fluid—or, as A. P. Hill was soon
To learn: volatile, volcanic. With more decision
For discipline than Lee could ever muster
In his aristocratic blood. Stonewall Jackson,
The Confederate Hannibal, who marched his troops
To a lather at night that they should not bleed
In the morning. Stonewall Jackson, a relentless
Taskmaster, who, thirty-five pounds underweight
In the field and drawn like a bow about ready
To snap, could ignore the needs of his starveling
Beggars for the sake of munitions and the boom
Of offensive. Yet they say in retreat he would
Fight for a wheelbarrow. A curious mixture of
Satan and saint, with a mind as ruthless as
A granite epitaph and a heart burning incense of
Pity and prayer. A remark to end gallantry shown
To courageous foes leading wild charges: "Shoot
Them all. I do not wish them to be brave."
The poetry of grief at his first wife's death:
"Pure and lovely companion of my happier days—
We loved each other on earth; shall that love
Be diminished in eternity?" In many ways
This multiplication table in sacky single-breasted
Coat of a major from the Mexican war and forage cap
With visor down to the nose was a military
Reincarnation of the fiery Bishop of Hippo:

Passionate and puritanical, daring beyond
The wildest dreams of imagination, yet soberly
Cautious enough in the face of disaster to teach
The bullheaded Longstreet a thing or two about
Economy and power. Seeing him so, seeing him
As a Rebel Augustine helps one to understand
The tremendous self-denial, the asceticism
And withholding of tears; the Spanish terms of
Endearment, the craving for liquor; the memories
Of dapper flirtations in a land of sunshine
And laughter. Lover of art, affectionate friend
Of cavalier Stuart, with an eye for beauty
And an ear for song, Old Jack couldn't carry a tune
In a hamper, ate his bread without butter, stripped
Gold braid from his rank, and sat little Sorrel
Like a tinkertoy ready to come part in the wind.
Sparing of speech, quick to punish all oaths,
Still he could smile at the profanity of Taylor
And grieve at the loss of pungent Dick Ewell,
Executive officer and master of four-letter
Anglo-Saxon.

And what did others think of Tom Fool?
Ewell thought him mad and said so:
"Damn this Valley to hell. Every day I keep
Looking for an order to storm the North Pole!"
But the baldheaded lisping jaybird came to worship
His boss and would have stormed a much warmer
region
Had Jackson so ordered. Quartermaster Harman
Once roared: "I won't be talked to like that!
I will give you my resignation this instant."
General Whiting flamed out: "Jackson treated me
Like a dog. It's an outrage. Oh, hang him!
I believe he hasn't more sense than my horse!"
But Harman learned that no one dared to imply
Cowardice among members of the famous foot
cavalry,
And Whiting had knocked in vain at the sanctuary
Of secrecy, where Jackson served the God of triumph
Alone: "If my coat knew my plans, as Frederick
The Great once said, I would take it off and burn
It. And if I can deceive my friends, I can make

Certain of deceiving my enemies." Though the New
York *Mercury* declared facetiously that Stonewall
Had descended from Jack, the giant killer,
And could live a fortnight on two crackers
And a barrel of whisky, the general drowsed through
Many a Sunday sermon and liked to raise vegetables.
His wife, Mary Anna, thought him handsome, but
knew
That he waited for no one. Having lived with his
Punctilious schedule, his catechism recitals
And problems in training the memory, she understood
The uncompromising mind behind the maxims of his
Youth: *Disregard Public Opinion When It Interferes
With Your Duty. Sacrifice Your Life Rather Than
Your Word. Lose Not Time. Be Always Employed In
Something Useful: Cut Off Unnecessary Actions.
Be Not Disturbed At Trifles, Nor At Accidents.*
And though she could admire his cold refusal
To read press reports of himself and his corps,
She could also warm her soul at the hidden fire
Of his overwhelming ambition. Ambition he had:
Enough to kill a hundred lesser men who lacked
The strength to control it. And now in June of 1862
Stonewall's ambition calls for 60,000 grays
With shoes for an invasion of the North. The price
Of success has risen 50,000 in the year since First
Manassas—a lesson in the cost of delay, a lesson
For history to study. But Jefferson Davis is
An inept pupil and is willing for Lee to trade five
For four in the fever-ridden swamplands around
Richmond—a bloodletting which the South can ill
Afford for something far less than what Jackson
Envisions. Thus the dictates of a timid old maid
Are worse than those of a ruthless warrior,
And tragedy haunts battles fought on the wrong
Ground at the wrong time.

3. The Men

And who were the men of laughter and complaint,
The men of love for the master of five-minute naps

Who drove them like a Fury out of hell?
Not the slow-eyed dandies of mint juleps and Plato,
The privileged gentlemen of Greek-pillared mansions,
Immaculate riding stables, and an endless round
Of midnight masquerades and lazy afternoon hunts,
For these plantation patricians were a stereotyped
Invention of the North, a myth of class hatred
As ridiculous as the merciless lash of Simon Legree.
No, the men under Jackson were only a yeasting
Of cavalier—the primary dough for the sacrificial
Bread he served the god of war was an elastic
Mixture of farmer and merchant, laborer and cowboy,
Teacher and dockhand, with a salty pinch of convict
And professional gambler and a sweetening of
Beardless student to be blessed and broken to
The prayers of minister and priest. Forty percent
Of the saviors of the Valley signed their names
With an X and looked upon the French-speaking
Creoles of New Orleans as "furriners." Armed with
Shotguns and fowling pieces, smooth-bore muskets
And converted flintlocks, squirrel rifles and Yankee
Breechloaders, these Johnny Rebs fought on hardtack
And tobacco juice, fat moldy bacon and pasty blue
Beef; fought on dried peas and branch water,
Unshucked field corn, and an occasional jar of
Preserves from home; fought on a rank and miserable
Diet of never enough till their rotting innards
Diarrhea'd and scurvied them down to an early grave
Dug to the dictates of measles, malaria, erysipelas,
Pneumonia, smallpox. If ever this war should be
Lost in sentimental mist so that admiring youngsters
Look upon the combatants as bronzed giants
And marble-limbed gods waging honorable death in
A western replica of star-spangled Ilion, waging
Honorable death to the baptismal tears of virtuous
Nymphs in diaphanous silk while angelic bands
Played hymnodic marches for the twilight of glory,
Let it be remembered that five out of every six
Confederate casualties fell to disease rather than
To enemy lead and steel. Remembering death so
Reduces war, like bright tin soldiers over the fire
Of a child's remolding ladles, to a proper
Perspective—where victory and defeat whisper dry

Gibberish through the sunless sockets of a grinning
Skull. Yet such reduction is needed for tragedy,
For no man dies in abstraction, and the removal
Of romance is the discovery of truth—truth
Which remembers death so and endears the weakness
Of flesh to the living, lest the present should
Love mere statues of the past and worship a history
Of lies thicker than the December fog at
Fredericksburg that had to lift before Burnside
Could shatter wave after wave of unique identities
At a blazing stone wall of Southern thunder.

Lean and getting leaner, the foot cavalry of Jackson
Were a far cry from the close-shaven, scented,
Elegant-mannered and picturesque heroes of
A saccharine movie or from the tenderfoot amateurs
Of 1861, who Virgina-Reeled off to war with packing
Cases, trunks, body servants, hampers full of ham
And fried chicken, and the memory of eau de cologne
Still fresh in their hearts—as though the grim
Task of killing Yankees were a Sunday picnic
Or a weekend outing for an academy of giggling
Sun-bonneted belles. He travels the fastest who
Travels the lightest: this was the unwritten maxim
Of these veteran legions, who slept in pairs with
Oilcloth above and below and two blankets between.
Wearing short gray jackets ragged at hips, they
Conquered nonchalantly with No—no overcoats, no
Bayonets (so dear to their general), no canteens
(Tin cups at the belt were quicker), no boxes for
Cartridges (pockets served better instead), no
Revolvers (they gambled away what was useless),
No soap for a bath that couldn't be taken anyway,
Since Jackson moved them too fast for hot water.
No soldiers ever marched with less to clutter
And hinder or were more hungry, thin, lice-eaten,
Pestered by itch. They wore white cotton underwear
Months without change, till the rot and the stench
Were too much and they donned a new nation of
Crawlies. Sublimely indifferent to sanitation,
They dug the latrines for encampment and evacuated
Elsewhere and brought flies swarm-buzzing the ears
And tickle-footing the mouth that exhaustion might

Have its own touching lullaby to companionable sleep.
Thus the standard joke of the truth about rest:
"I can't catch a wink without some nibbling of flesh."
Yes, they were a scratch lot of beggars, sentimental
Over women, children, and pets; lovers of "Lorena,"
"The Girl I Left Behind Me," and "Home Sweet
Home,"
Which they sang down every wheel-rutted road
That Jackson pursued in search of a dream unnamed;
Sang with only a few berries, persimmons, or apples
In season tucked away in their thin blanket rolls;
Sang because the right hand of God was a thunderbolt
In the heart of their idol, and with such fierce
Lightning to lead them they could not help but win.
In his smoldering Old Testament eyes, they rose
Forever meridian to burn the dry brush of night
And death and choke the cold North with the smoke
Of their courage and splash forest and field
With the liquid wildfire of unspeakable sacrifice.

And now in mid-June of 1862, while Colonel Boteler
Rides to Richmond to beg reinforcements
For Jackson's intended invasion of the North,
While he rides with the high taut voice of triumph
Still tinning in his ears ("If they will only give
Me 60,000 men, I will go right on to Pennsylvania.
I will not go down the Valley; I don't want
The people there to be harrassed. I will go
With 40,000 if the President will give them to me.
My route will be along the east of the Blue Ridge—"
And the statesman soldier grins at remembrance:
"I ought not to have told you even that.
But in two weeks I could be at Harrisburg."),
While he rides with the most daring hope ever
Entrusted to his eloquent influence—the unknowing
Foot cavalry begin a five-day rest in the meadows
Of Limestone Valley, pleased with congratulations
From their general—congratulations as bright
And sweet as the ripened cherries they pick and eat
In moments of skylarking idleness.

BOOK ONE: THE PENINSULA CAMPAIGN

1. The Ride To Richmond

Upon the collapse of Boteler's mission, Jackson
Was ordered with his corps to Richmond to help Lee
Lift the siege of 105,000 Federals, led by
The little Napoleon, who, with the spires of
The Confederate Capital in sight, decided to entrench
Across the Chickahominy and gather his force
For the final kill. Knowing the timidity of
McClellan in the presence of victory, knowing his
Monomania of caution which sought assurances
beyond
All reasonable certainty, knowing his hysterical
Habit of overestimating enemy strength like a
peasant
Clown in a comic opera, knowing his melodramatic
Letters to Lincoln asking for reinforcements not
In existence to be had, knowing of his braggadocio
And swagger, his meticulous staff work, his idol:
Popularity—history must doubt that the hand
Which shook to a draw at Antietam, after holding
A five-to-two advantage on a shallow field between
Two streams, could ever have plucked from the breast
Of Virginia that brightest jewel for an emperor's
Crown. Handsome George looked the part of his hero
But lacked the inner stuff of the Corsican corporal.
And because of that lack history must believe
That Jackson was wise—and more than wise—
In wanting troops for a drive up the Blue Ridge
To stick a sword in the heart of the North and make
The Railsplitter drop his ax, which even now was
Sharp at the roots of the black-blossomed tree
Of sacred States Rights. But the gaunt major general
Was overruled by his commander-in-chief, the West
Point graduate wounded at Buena Vista, the
Secretary
Of War under Franklin Pierce, the adolescent
estimator

Of his own military genius, who resigned a frontier
Commission in 1835 because of ill health.
The smoking breath of Yankee cannon is hot
In the forking blue veins of swamp and jungle
So close to the pump of arterial gray, and Davis
Calls for an operation to relieve the pressure
And let the bad blood out. Lee, the paper-pushing
Engineer newly appointed to the office of amputee
Johnston, Lee, the aristocratic son of Washington's
Cavalry captain (who halo'd his chief in immortal
Words: "First in war, first in peace, and first
In the hearts of his countrymen."), Lee, the failure
At independent command in 1861, yields to
presidential
Authority and drafts his plan to include the victor
Of the Valley—the thirty-eight-year-old ex-professor
With a reputation greater than his own. And thus,
No matter what history believes, the changeless
Present of every act is forever free to foster its
Error and to freeze each succeeding generation
In the same unlearning art of mistake,
For the ignoble maxim of safety first is the father
Of expedience and quick results and denies
Any kinship with that godlike spirit of man
Which sows the bright seeds of legitimate honor
In the dark bastard flesh of danger and disgrace.

After the decision of the government against their
Commander, on June 17 Stonewall's corps began
To march eastward, with Rev. Dabney leading
At the head of Ewell's division. By June 21
The vanguard was at Gordonsville, and Jackson had
Chewed on General Winder's dignity with a refusal
Of leave, while the men in the snaking columns
Wondered with tight-lipped humor where this latest
Maneuver would end: "Old Jack passed orders that we
Didn't know a durned thing till after the next fight,
And we're keeping our mouths shut." And keep them
Shut they did—to the utter exasperation of fussy
And self-important field officers, who found it next
To impossible to locate commands, states, or local
Identities: "I don't know" was the watchword of
An army of nondescripts moving to Anybody's Guess

By way of Nowhere. After a brief rest at
Gordonsville,
Jackson took a Saturday night train with Rev.
Dabney
To Frederickshall, where he stayed in the home of
Nathaniel Harris with Generals Hood and Whiting.
Sunday brought a sermon from Dabney, a talk with
A guide to Richmond, cautious farewells to
Subordinates, a late impressment order for relays
Of fresh horses on the route to Richmond, and a firm
Command that quartermaster Harman was to address
Stonewall simply as colonel on the journey.
Mrs. Harris prepared breakfast at "the usual hour"
Monday morning, only to find that the commander
Had been gone since one. Secrecy, always secrecy.

Fifty-two miles in fourteen hours—that was the pace
Of the ride. But what was the passion, the inner
Pulse? Fourteen months, thought the general called
Colonel, fourteen months of defensive maneuvering,
Governmental bungling, victory-killing delay—
Fourteen months of watching the enemy add to his
Overwhelming resources of men and equipment.
Battles won, but the triumphs never driven home.
And now the neck of Richmond in a Yankee noose
And the President demanding a sword to cut the rope
Rather than forcing Lincoln to untie it
By an offensive removed from the scene where
mistake
Can be fatal. Let me set fire to my enemy's house
Before I have to sacrifice friends to put out the one
In my own. If I can shoot the foaming-mouthed dog
Far out in the fields, he cannot get into my sheep,
And my children shall not run mad with the rabies.
But how to convince the timid parlor-chair
Strategists who prefer to wrestle with the thief
On their very front porch rather than decoy him
Into an ambush?

Cold, cold was the mind of Stonewall Jackson
While he rode as in a dream to the thud thud of hoofs
In the June dust of Virginia. An early morning
Breeze whispered in the leafy tent overhead,

And the moon swam out of a cloud bank, casting
weird
Light and pale shadow on the dark prophecy spoken
To Harman: "Sir, history shows clearly that in civil
Strife the weaker side cannot hope to win by waging
A defensive war." Then silence a mask on the tight
Mouth, and no reply from the quartermaster too
numb
For words and fearing to risk speech lest
The confessional mood be broken and the general
clam
Up as always when the pearl of his wisdom was
seeking
Exposure. Thud thud of the hoofs, leafy fingers
At the lips of whispering night, and the moon
Bearing witness to ideas too sharp to contain:
"In war, sir, always mystify. Mislead and surprise
The enemy. When you strike and overcome him,
Never let up in pursuit so long as your men have
Strength to follow, for an army routed, if hotly
Pursued, becomes panic-stricken, and can then be
Destroyed by half their number."

More words in succession than Jackson had spoken
To Harman since their altercation in the Valley,
More words in succession than the grim deacon was
Accustomed to speak to anyone except his *esposita.*
But his stern sense of duty was grappling with
The knowledge that the coming campaign was
something
Less than the best, and military genius demanded
Language as partial payment for the painful task
Of obeying at any price. Once again the tight mouth
Opened: "Another rule—never fight against heavy
Odds, if by any possible maneuvering you can hurl
Your own forces on only a part, and that the weakest
Part, of your enemy and crush it. Such tactics
Will win every time, and a small army may thus
Destroy a large one in detail, and repeated victory
Will make it invincible." "Let us hope,"
Said Harman, "that General Lee will know what to
do."
"Under the circumstances I dare say he will,"

Replied Jackson, aware of his own subordination.
"But let it be remembered that it is always better
For a lion to lead an army of rabbits than for
A rabbit to lead an army of lions!" And the dawn
Broke quietly.

2. Conference At Dabbs' Farmhouse

Confident that his every move had been properly
Screened, Stonewall arrived at the Dabbs' Farmhouse
Near Nine Mile Bridge at drowsy, hot, soft-footed
Three o'clock in the afternoon of June 23. His
Confidence was at fault: a Confederate deserter from
Gordonsville fell into Union cavalry at Hanover
Courthouse the following day, and McClellan learned
That fifteen conquering brigades were prepared
To attack his flank. Once out of the Valley,
Jackson found military security a ball of quicksilver.
But his fatigue was right and sorely begged
attention:
With Lee at work inside, the dusty scarecrow general
Slumped in the yard, head down, against the white
Picket fence and dreamed of cool sweet-petaled rain
On his cotton tongue and the warm buds of love
On his leaden eyes. And dreaming so, he was
awakened
By a familiar voice, the sharp-toothed voice of
Near-sighted D. H. Hill, brother-in-law by the second
Marriage, fellow student and professor of
mathematics,
And proud defender of the younger man's fame:
"By God," said Hill, "if you aren't the last person
In Virginia I expected to see here! Why, only
Yesterday you were far down the Shenandoah,
waltzing
Your cannon against Banks and Shields!" Jackson
Curled his wry grin, rose in aching sections, shook
Hands and said: "Reports vary. Trust only what you
Scout yourself—and then make allowance for
glasses."
Hill laughed. "All the same, Tom, I'm glad you're

Here. Now maybe we'll take the initiative."
"Yes," hawked the eagle flapping at his feathers
With stiff wings. "But how *are* things here, Dan?"
"Bad," moaned the owl behind the thick lenses.
"My men have been falling back steadily for weeks;
The enemy is all but numberless, and we have little
Food. For three days now the only issue is corn
In the shuck." Jackson relaxed his frown for
A moment: "Praise God that empty bellies and full
Hearts have forced McClellan to a halt. Spoils will
Soon ease the hunger." "Perhaps," said Hill.
Then he slammed a booted foot on the ground: " Full
Hearts are rare enough in this swampland!
Thousands
Have run to Richmond to play sick, and the bastardly
Cannon explodes in our faces!" Jackson arched
An eyebrow at the news. "Cowards!" screamed Hill.
"Cowards to the rear and asses in ordnance, who mold
Metal too brittle for a standard charge!" Then
Hill was off in a blistering tirade, while Jackson
Closed his ears to hot language and opened his mind
To cold facts and the heavy shot of frustration.

Before the asperic D. H. could scrape the paint
From the farmhouse with the file of his tongue,
An aide appeared to announce the readiness of Lee
To meet with his generals. The owl and the eagle
Entered headquarters. Gravely courteous,
The commander rose from his table-desk, shook hands
With the two, and lingered for a moment of deference
With the greenest laurels of the South. "I expect
You must be very tired, General Jackson." "A little."
"May I get you some refreshment?" "A glass of milk
Will do, I think." "And you, General Hill?"
"Whatever Tom has is good enough for me," said
The notorious champion of temperance. "Yes, it does
Seem to yield us victory," said Lee, with a slight
Touch of humor in his mellow voice. Stonewall
Downed his drink in a few quick gulps; Hill sipped
And savored the sweetness. Lee turned to business.
At fifty-five, he had held command for just three
Weeks and had fought no battle beyond the closing
Hours of inconclusive Seven Pines. Handsome he was,

Charming he was. An erect and fine-limbed warrior
With the clean-cut features of a Grecian god,
The gentle ways of a Christian knight pulling on
The gauntlet of sainthood. But the hand was firm
Under the steel, though the eyes were used to tears.
Intimately influential with President Davis,
Robert E. Lee would have little trouble with exacting
Obedience, and something deeper than soldierly yes,
From subordinates. This Jackson could see as he
Watched the gray-haired commander with cold mind
And inscrutable mask of indifference. True, some
Envious heads still wagged in whispered criticism
Of the ascent of the staff officer, the paper-shuffler,
The engineer. But once hearts were stolen, the heads
Would be still. And though Stonewall had never
Entered the windy lists against Lee, he knew
There was no substitute for triumph, stolen hearts
Notwithstanding. Respect and admiration he felt
For this soldier, but final surrender of will
Depended on action in the field. And so the victor
Of the Valley listened and weighed with a cold mind.

"Gentlemen," said Lee, his eyes on Jackson's
Impassive face, "I wish that General Johnston's
Mantle had fallen on an abler man, or that I were
Able to drive our enemies back to their home. I
Have no ambition and no desire but the attainment
Of this object, and therefore wish for its
Accomplishment by him that can do it most
    speedily—
And thoroughly. To that end, I have drawn up plans
For our combined assault on McClellan. The reasons
For a flank attack on Federal positions are many
And, I think, militarily sound. Richmond cannot
Long survive a siege. To prevent such a siege, we
Must assume the offensive." Lee pointed to the map.
Hill and Jackson read the blue dispositions quickly.
"Because of inexperience among our troops,"
The commander continued, "we dare not risk direct
Assault on strong trench works heavily backed by
Superior artillery. If this be granted, then our
Only course is to engage the enemy in a turning
Movement. Notice that McClellan's forces are astride

The Chickahominy." Jackson nodded; his grim mouth
Opened: "Like ripe wheat in a field, the Yankee
Right flank invites the scythe." "Exactly so,"
Said Lee, who saw fierce fires raging in the eagle's
Eyes. "Success north of the stream will soon
Threaten McClellan's line of communications.
As you see, his base is at White House, and the York
River Railroad crosses the Chickahominy at Dispatch
Station—only twelve miles to the rear of his exposed
Right flank." Hill handed his empty glass to an aide
And said, "It looks as though we will force
The little Napoleon to relocate his army north of
The Chickahominy to defend his base." "Or better
Yet," said Lee to the myopic owl, "force him
To withdraw south—to seek a new base on the James
River." "Then we must concentrate overwhelmingly
To the north," said Hill. "And so we shall," Lee
Answered. "But General," objected Jackson, swift
As a hound on the scent of danger, "what is to prevent
McClellan from storming Richmond on the south
While we move heavily on the north?" Lee smiled
In humble recognition of this major weakness in his
Plan: "President Davis has called my attention
To this very risk. And as I told him, I depend on
A certain timidity in the Federal commander, speed
In concentrating on our part, confusion of the enemy
Once our assault has begun, good fortune,
And the never-failing mercy of Divine Providence."
"Amen," said Jackson, who then fell silent,
While Lee pointed out two other sources of possible
Difficulty. The fact that President Jefferson Davis
Had raised the same objections went far in answering
The eagle's sense of momentary insecurity.
Ever since the controversy over the Romney expedition,
Stonewall had entertained but small respect for
The President as a military mind. Refusal of his
Plan to invade the North had only served to confirm
His intense antipathy to Davis. And now the victor
Of the Valley wished that he hadn't spoken out
Against Lee's strategy. "Yes," the mellow voice
Was saying, "if the flank anchors on Beaver Dam Creek,

It will be hard to attack directly." Hill and Jackson
Followed Lee's finger to the sore spot on the map.
"They hold good ground," the commander observed,
"And may dispute hotly our crossing of the Meadow
Bridges and the Mechanicsville Bridges." Again
The finger touched the boils on the face of Southern
Assault. "Three of our divisions must pass over
These bridges."

Before the aristocratic Virginian could completely
Unfold his plan, Generals Longstreet and A. P. Hill
Entered headquarters and gathered at the conference
Table. Lee made the introductions, though there was
Little need beyond his strict sense of formal courtesy.
Stonewall was less attentive to the other subordinates
Than he should have been. He had known Dutch
Longstreet in Mexico, and now he saw the senior
Major general high in the favor of Lee. And what
He saw of the man, he didn't like: a mere captain
And Union paymaster when Secession came; squat,
Domineering, stubborn debater for defense; partially
Deaf at forty-one, with a voice loud and heavy with
Gruff, clumsy German humor; lacking requisite
Imagination for bold attack and woefully inadequate
In the proper uses for artillery—Dutch Longstreet
Was sharp thorn in the brow of brilliance. Able
And courageous in many ways, he still would rather
Argue than obey, prove himself right rather than win.
Arrogance without accompaniment of genius. So
The eagle saw the bull, and hooded his distaste
For horns of laughter flashing stupidly in confident
Intimacy with feathers ruffled from painful flights
In the darkening skies of thunderbolted war. Lee
Could not help but sense the rivalry; he made
A mental note to beware of fanning flames of envy
And contention. As for A. P. Hill, Jackson had known
Him well at West Point. At thirty-seven, one year
Stonewall's junior, the hot-tempered red head was
A study in nervous, slashing impatience. Brilliant,
Yes. But given to abrupt moves and careless
Oversights. A man to be disciplined severely
At times in order that the dark stallion of his
Hurricane desires might not topple the Confederate

Chariot down a rugged precipice of prematurity in
act.
So the eagle saw the tiger. And seeing so, prophesied
Behind the mask of secrecy he wore, terrible enmity
Between the bellow and the roar. Noise of deadly
Hate that Lee would have to silence before bells
Of peace could ring in Richmond.

But all was easy armistice within the room:
The bull and eagle, owl and tiger listened to
The mellow voice of the circus master as he previewed
In detail the entertainment now in store, with all
Appropriate fireworks, for the Yankees. "General
Jackson will flank Beaver Dam Creek; General
Branch
Is to protect the right and clear the Meadow Bridges;
General A. P. Hill will secure the Mechanicsville
Bridges so that Generals D. N. Hill and Longstreet
May advance. Once these movements have been
Accomplished, the entire force will attack in echelon,
From left to right as follows: Stuart, Jackson,
D. H. Hill, A. P. Hill, Longstreet. And, gentlemen,"
Here Lee paused for a momentary smile, "if all goes
Well, we shall storm New Bridge, re-establish
Contact with our troops south of the Chickahominy,
And press on to intersect the York River Railroad."
Intelligent eyes had marked every eloquent gesture
Of finger on the map. A second or two of breathing
Silence, and then a bellow from the bull: "It's
Clear, General, that McClellan's head is in the noose!"
"Pray God it be so," said Lee. "But I prefer
His neck instead." A grim smile cracked the mask
Of Jackson, for he didn't like the image used by
Longstreet—John Brown once had his head within
A noose, but somehow a fatal life had managed
To escape the execution and a martyr's spirit now
Walked with windy violence through gardens of
The South. A spirit that Lee was now trying
Desperately to slam a groaning iron gate upon
And keep him wandering the wailing hymns of free-
dom
Outside the high stone walls of a prison called
The Confederacy. Thus Jackson saw the maneuver—

The slamming of an iron gate in the face of Lincoln
And the spirit, and he prayed that the gate should
Not come unhinged or shatter in the center from
Sheer momentum of such ponderous weight. The thin
Lips moved above the dusty beard: "What shall be
Done south of the Chickahominy to cover the main
Offensive, General?" "I knew you would be satisfied
On that account," said Lee, "for, as you have so ably
Demonstrated, that is the point of greatest danger.
And we shall meet it so: on the day of battle,
The two divisions of Magruder and Huger will feint
And raise a fuss—more bark than bite—to shake
McClellan's poise. Should something serious develop
On their front, the four brigades of Generals Holmes
And Wise, on either side the James, will move
Quickly in support. But should the enemy withdraw,
Magruder and Huger will pursue most vigorously."
And thus Lee's plans were laid before them in tones
Of gentle authority bordering on humility.
The Presbyterian marveled at the unguarded frankness
Of the Anglican, an openness that ran counter to
His very grain of hush to all lieutenants seeking
More than minimum necessity dictated them to know
For strict performance of duty. And though he saw
A thousand ways in which the gate could fail to slam,
He spoke no more against the plan: all strategy
Depends on tactics for success. As for himself,
He'd do his best—let others raise objections
As they would. But when Lee called for such
Objections, there were none. "Then, gentlemen,
I'll let you settle the details among yourselves."
And with that, the commander left the conference for
A time. Longstreet, senior present, led discussion.

Eagle, eagle, staring fiercely at a map
Of swamp and fever land you do not know,
You are tired beyond revival of a nap
And yet you have the longest flight to go.

The bull, the bull, mechanical and slow,
Snorts assignment to the roughest road
And lays on wings tautgaunt as any bow
An iron cross—the campaign's heaviest load.

How can you fly tomorrow to attack?
Fatigue has split your tongue to say
The wrong time. The hazy word call back.
Accept the bull's advice: another day.

Your men, your men, poor urchins in the mud,
Are bogged, exhausted, out of smiles;
Though ready for your sake to shed their blood,
They string out toward the Valley twenty miles.

Eagle, eagle, lean as any stick,
Soon to nod from saddle, on your return
You'll find the Reverend Dabney sick
From the same strange fires that in you burn.

Wagons, wagons, they are everywhere,
Maddening your officers with mule delay;
The scent of heavy rain is in the air—
Accept the bull's advice: another day.

3. Army On The Move

Next day, June 24, the eagle slept a little while
(He had dozed less than ten hours in the past
Ninety-six), as torrential rain made rivers of
The local creeks and enemy pickets contested every
Boot-sucking step of glue-earth advance on roads
So poorly mapped that Lincoln Syndor, native of
The region, led General Ewell and Jackson's vanguard
All astray: new paths hacked by Yankees through
The jungle caused him to lose familiar landmarks.
Cursing Dick, baldheaded jaybird with the lisp of
Rage, hopped up and down in threats of hanging
For the guide: the heavy guns were nearly buried
In mud and thickets of inertia, where mosquitoes
Whined like minie balls and tropic heat sapped
The last ounce of patience from the will. Only
The moldly knight of resurrection from brief fitful
Dreams, astride little Sorrel like the Spanish
Gentleman of windmill war on Rozinante, could calm
The major general. "The blame lies higher up,"
Said Jackson. And so it did. So high, in fact,
It came to rest like a funeral wreath at the door

Of the Richmond White House. Fourteen months of
Military action, and still Confederate commanders
Knew no more of the topography within a day's
march
Of their own capital than they did of that of central
Africa. General Taylor said so. And the owl moaned
About the vague red line running parallel east
With the Chickahominy—the only guide on the route
To his position. His brother-in-law, with farther
Ranging vision, could foresee the final meaning of
That line: red symbol of the lavish spending of young
Southern blood. Blood earned on thousands of
Half-illiterate pages in the private histories
Of love time-locked and guarded by the human heart.
And because that heart will rise and play,
When every drum of madness has been stilled,
Its symphony of joy from windy mountain heights,
New-necklaced with transfigured jewels of heaven—
It is fitting now that we should read, with reverence
For the pain that was its life, a few excerpts from
The glory that was once the spirit of this corps.

Winslow Adams

Professional gambler, flush from the Mississippi
Riverboats, Winslow Adams enlisted for adventure
From the buried ace that forced him into duels
From New Orleans to St. Louis, to say nothing of
The blackeyed charmer with the thick honey of
Memphis
In her throat who dreamt of a golden ring on her
Third finger left and the patter of little feet
In the halls of lazy Sunday afternoons. Freedom,
In a word, made him join the ranks of gray denial
To all personal liberty. But as he marched,
With heavy petals of June rain a fragrance in his
Merry heart, his berry lips whistled *Dixie*
To the gathering mud. What the hell, war wasn't
Bad—not so long as he could cross the suttlers'
Palms with Yankee gold for extra rations
And the betting boys failed to see how he warmed
The plate his favorite louse leapt off first to win
The company stakes. For him, all living was

A matter of odds. And if his crotch burned from
The rub of coarse cotton on sweat, his heart glowed
With the protective weight of an unmarked deck
(Better defense against a bullet than the Bible)—
And in his right pants pocket the ivory cubes rattled
A pleasant song of invitation to a cast before
The fire.

Though the cornpone is gritty with cob
And bread on a ramrod is hard,
I can always dice with a slob
And turn me a friendly card.

Though the bacon they give me is fat
And the beef is a mucous blue,
I can always find an ace in my hat
And win the vittles I have to.

And I'd rather be wet in the rain
Than dry in the arms of a belle,
For legal love in bed is a pain
And paying bills—a hell.

So I'll march with Stonewall's men,
Who weaken on soup and gruel,
March till the odds diminish again
And I know myself a fool

Staring at death from a cannon mouth
Under the keen of that Rebel cry
That plants triumphant flags of the South
In the heart of a Yankee sky.

And I'd rather be wet in the rain
Than dry in the arms of a belle,
For legal love in bed is a pain
And paying bills—a hell.

And if I march to a Southern rout
And the time when I have to die,
I'll merely say that my luck ran out
And blow a kiss to the sky.

Father Charles Martel

Namesake of the victor at Tours, blocky squat

And heavy-shouldered, with an angry tongue as rough
As a sailor's, Father Charles Martel rode a Yankee
Nag captured at Harper's Ferry—compliments of
The Old Man, who blinked his Protestant eyes at
The Catholic priest and said, "I am deeply grateful,"
When informed that his predestined soul was mentioned
For God's benefit at every Mass. And so the little
Hammer of the Church received easy passage to his
Communicants and was blessed with a tent to shield
His wooden altar and the sacrificial Host against
The elements, that Nature might not boast of turning
Would-be saints away from the worship of the One,
True, Universal, Holy, and Apostolic Faith.
Approaching middle age (some snow already in his
Hair), tired of pious admissions in confessional
Of failure to say grace before meals by ladies of
The Altar Guild, and sick of too much perfume from
Creole whores in the incense of Sunday Benediction,
He gave up his hopes for a monsignor's hat and left
A lucrative parish in New Orleans for the war.
At first the bishop stood opposed, but with his
Customary force, the little hammer banged away
To freedom in the missionary field of soldiers much
In need of the anointment of salvation: "Your
Excellency, the Lord has laid His holy hands upon
Me for this work. Why, I know not—unworthy as I am.
But the purposes of God are strange, and many times
He chooses an ugly block of obstinant stupidity
Like me. The call is clear: I must go, and by eternal
Fire—I shall!" And so he did, with arrogance
Enough at first to convert all Christianity to
Heathendom. But war had shown him something more
Than what he taught in catechism; the Valley Campaign
Chipped layers of granite from his soul, and now he
Rode half naked with humility in the rain—fiercely
Loyal to Stonewall and his men. Men who, in spite
Of oaths and jibes and petty thefts, were tabernacles
Of the living flame; men who, in spite of onion

Breaths and stale armpits and whiskey heads, were
Sweeter than the prayers of great St. Joan of Arc;
Men who, in spite of poker and dice and trips with
Giggling girls into the woods, could sing more
Joyfully than angels on the wings of Christmas night.
Men ragged and dirty, empty-stomached and out of
Shoes, who died with dignity of prayer upon their
Lips and starlight in their eyes. And though he
Hated slavery with a passion, Father Charles Martel
Loved these men with greater passion, knowing
Christ
Would walk with them—nay, die for them—forgiving
Ignorance of darkness in their childish hearts.
And as he rode the muddy roads toward Hundley's
Corner and the furious killing, he offered up
His Penitential Office all for them. The men to die.

Master of the darkened skies:
When Thy thunders roar,
For their sake, make me wise,
That I may serve Thee more.

Clear my blear-all eyes
To see what they do not:
The hate which crucifies
That love be not forgot

By Thee Who art all love.

Dr. Butler Wade

Born among Charleston's finest, reared with easy
Grace, top student in his graduating class
At the University of South Carolina, later number
One in medicine, and promising young intern
At Richmond, Dr. Butler Wade turned his back
On exciting research in Baltimore and genteel practice
At home to follow the dictates of his patriotic blood.
And in his choice he forfeited the chance to marry
Well above his own high station with a distant cousin,
Heiress to shipping millions, in New York. "Should
You decide to cast your golden future into an iron
Ladle for leaden fools to play tin soldier with, I

Shall remove your diamond from my hand." Execute
The threat she did, and so he wore the ring upon
A silver chain about his neck that he might not
Forget how death can come to every man before
The digging of his grave. Now he sits his ambulance
Beside a freckled, redbearded, tobacco-mumpsy
Sergeant from Tennessee, who spits dark amber at
The winking puddles and swears blue flame at two
Gray mules stubborn in traces rotting with rain.
At every jolt and lurch, cold diamond sears
His heart with memories of divorcement in the soul—
Until the mountaineer opines: "Yes, sir, Captain,
This here fit'll make Manassas look like a church
Bazaar." Then wet reality returns, and Dr. Butler
Wade recalls the need for bandages and morphine,
So precious now for wounded men—who otherwise
will
Die.

A butcher, not a surgeon,
That's how I feel at times
When mutilations burgeon:
Red roses of the crimes

That men commit on men,
Who else were living whole.
Amputations once again
That cut me to the soul.

Yet scalpel flesh I must,
Though inwardly I bleed,
To save some tortured dust
For simple love and mere need.

Ronald Sandford

Second classman at the Point when Beauregard took
Sumter; bored with mathematics, history, astronomy;
Seeing little use for fortifications for an army
On the move, and sentimental as a drunken whore
About the tiny crossroads town he called his own
In Alabama, Ronald Sandford resigned to march
As a second lieutenant with Stonewall Jackson
Through the Valley. He was proud of Mama, Papa,

Three lovely sisters, and a baby brother; proud
Of the life they had led together in coon-and-possum
Hunting winter and catfish-trolling summer. Glad
For all the chicken fries, firecracker-popping
Fourth-of-July picnics, guitar-strumming and banjo-
Plunking sermons at revival meetings (afterwards:
The ice cream and the lemonade); glad for husking
Bees at Hallowe'en, wild-turkey shoots at Thanksgiving,
And saltwater taffy kisses of Christmas day.
At twenty-one and in need of a shave three times
A week, he didn't see the war as one of slavery
Or of States Rights or of that sanctimonious word
That was colored pious dim as evening light filtering
Through stained-glass windows of a Montgomery church—
The Cause. No, such focused vision is given only
To those too old or eloquent or high in public office
Ever to have to shed their blood for what they see.
And since nimble knees and Indian-whooping spirits
Were his youth, Ronald Sandford saw only
That the little things which formed the substance
Of his life stood in peril of the bragging guns
Of strangers dressed in blue—monkeys whom the shaggy
Hound of Southern Valor had forced to chase their
Tails, chattering in terror at his bark, and tumbling
Through woods of ignominy from the fury of his bite.
Ah, the Old Man! He'd seen the Old Man twice—
Closeup. And each time a lump of unpressed cider
In his chest had made it hard to breathe. Stonewall
Jackson and the deep pools of liquid fire that were
His eyes are all the reason Ronald Sandford needs
Now to get his men across a swollen creek on backs
Of new-felled logs. And if, though tired, wet,
And hungry enough to eat a steer, this second
Lieutenant can still think war the only occupation
For a man and dream of silver bars where gold ones
Glisten in the rain, remember that heroes seldom
Master prudence and that the sacrifices of green
Age are sweeter to the soul of twenty-one than
Petaled roses on bud-lidded eyes of sleeping girls.

Mud on my boots, sun in my breast,
Enemy entrenchments before us,
But we'll whistle a summer storm from the west
And drown the Yanks in a Dixie chorus.

For they cannot swim with a lightning rod
Flashing bright peace for the ladies,
And when Stonewall's thunder hits them—by God,
They will all be blown to Hades!

Roger Tecknor

Son of a prosperous Raleigh tobacco merchant
And sole heir to the family estate, pinch-penny
Owner at thirty of a hardware store, livery stable,
And three-storey hotel — Roger Tecknor slogged wearily
On toward Jackson's martial rendezvous with fame
As the butt of every company joke. He winced when
Men played grab-ass in the ranks, and he was always
Being goosed by some crude mountain boy who loved
To hear the giddy squealing of this plump maid
In Rebel gray, whose roughest language when in anger
Was, "Oh, piss!" Dirty laughter of tormenters
Stained his soul beyond all bleaching; impotent
With childish rage, he could do nothing more than
Wish them all in hell, for which they tossed him
In a blanket once and later shaved a path of shame
In the dense mat of hair upon his blubber chest.
And because he had played dead in The Battle of
Cross Keys to save himself from death indeed, he
Now was subject of an ungallant hillbilly serenade:

When Yankee bullets whine our way,
Roger the Dodger runs away.
When Yankee cannon booms to kill,
Roger jumps behind a hill.
Now ain't the Dodger wise, I say?
He lives to die another day.

But with the echo of that song a dagger in his side,
He died with every step he took. Coward, yes.

He knew it all too well, for he had been a coward
All his life. Something there was about his pink
Opossum face and brown calf eyes that bleated
lambkin
Invitation to his sacrifice: "Come step on me:
My heart is like a shattered pumpkin—yellow mush."
And Gertrude White, the hometown lady of easy
virtue,
Did step on it; then Roger fell in love with
The pock-faced Amazon, who quickly understood his
Inability to court and win a woman of respect.
Something there was about his squeak-mouse lust
That no cooing dove of magnolia-blossom marriage
Could ever flush from hiding. So one fine day
Before the war, she said: "In love, a bird
In the bush is worth two in the hand." That night
Poor Roger (with gold enough for Gertrude's need)
Sheltered the hamlet of his hunger in the cherry-
Peaked mountains of her snowy breast. Although she
Failed to make a man of him, she cried him into
Service with a promise of devotion that had made
Him call her Queen of Ithaca—and if his literary
Pose was wasted on her ignorance, her madam mind
Knew well enough to bless him for the independent
Means he willed her should he fall before the gates
Of Troy. And now he marches thankful for the mud
And rain that keep the men from riding him (they
Scarcely have the strength to curse themselves);
Thankful for the misspelled letters in his hamper-
sack,
Nestled dry beside the sweetmeats, bacon,
And preserves recently arrived from home. And since
The gods are kindly (so he thinks), perhaps
The skitters that have lanked his jowls will cease
To trot, and maybe he will find the time before
A smoky fire to read some lines of Plato
While he dreams again of cherry peaks.

Proud Odysseus was a man,
And fierce Achilles too:
Not a warrior of their clan,
I jump at every boo!

Ghosts of heroes frighten me
Out of my slack skin:
Gertrude, please come tighten me
Your loving arms within.

Symposium tonight I'll read,
Iliad I cannot bear:
In it ghosts of heroes bleed
And tears set fire to air.

A general with Joshua eyes
Advances wet gray like a tide:
Under vast unminding skies
I pray that I may hide.

Hide from noise and flame in field
Torn like tender scars
Where only mute white crosses yield
Glory to the Stars and Bars.

Symposium tonight I'll read,
Iliad I cannot bear:
In it ghosts of heroes bleed
And tears set fire to air.

And ghosts of heroes frighten me
Out of my slack skin:
Gertrude, please come tighten me
Your loving arms within.

Sam Stover

Blacksmith from Atlanta, thirty-five and getting
Gray, rugged as an oak, with arms as thick as Parrott
Guns, Sam Stover crouched on stones he'd placed
To floor the mud and shoved a knotty-muscled
shoulder
Under the sagging bed of an ammunition wagon
mired
In spite of all the strain of four strong mules.
"All right, fellers," he said, "set to!—and don't
Stop to count the rain. Now heave!" Suck-gasping
Up, out came the wheels until they rested on
The stones. "Hot damn, Sergeant! We did it, we
Did it!" yelled a beardless officer of supply, fresh

From theoretical logistics learned at V.M.I.
Sam sniffed. "Good thing, too, Lieutenant. If we
Don't get this celebration powder to the front,
Old Jack'll make us quail on toast for breakfast."
Then he pulled a red bandanna from his Rebel blouse
And trumpeted his satisfaction with the deed.
But after private thunder, a cloud of anger darkened
On his leather face: "Corporal, if you don't keep
That brush-strewing party well ahead of this here
Train, I'll skin you right out of your Yankee
Underwear!" Sam, the corporal, and all others
In the company had benefited greatly from the spoils
Of war. Once again in the driver's seat, Sam cracked
A wetling whip and boomed out, "Huddup!" to the
mules.
The wagon train moved forward, while the corporal
Kept men felling brush against another bogging
In the mire. The giant veteran of six campaigns
Stuck a hamlike hand into a pocket of his soggy
Blues, compliments of Fremont and the Union
Commissary, and pulled out a small brown bottle
Full of medicine for summer colds. "Here, Lieutenant,
Have a swig—no sense in taking chill." The junior
Officer demurred: "A violation of regulations
To drink on duty." "Maybe so," said Sam,
"But shootfire, Lieutenant, the way I reckon it,
This here thing is more than duty—why, it's a simple
Case of safety and precaution in the face of
Overwhelming odds." "But the colonel might object."
"Let him," said Sam. "His bird ain't going to dry
Them creeks that lie ahead, and Old Jack'll keep
Us eating mud till midnight." Scruples yielded to
Superior wisdom, and soon two fragrant mouths were
Humming "The Girl I Left Behind Me" to the broad-
Rumped mules. Then only one, for Sam remembered
With a sudden blur that wasn't rain his precious
Margaret and the boy: lovely woman with shoebutton
Eyes and all the Christmas organs of Atlanta in her
Voice; frail and tender, capable of loving all
The lost stray orphan souls in a renegade world,
And yet unable to bear more than this one child—
His Mark, fourteen now, straight as an arrow,
Supple as a cat, but with a touch of elmy broadness

That was Sam's. "Shoeing horses will fill him out,"
The father thought, "but who's to take him hunting
In the fall?" Then he prayed the war would end
Before the boy enlisted for a grimmer kind of hunt.
"Yes, sir, old Yankee Breeches," the lieutenant said
With warm familiarity, "I don't know what I'd do
Without you." Sam dug a knuckle in the corner of
An eye and muttered to the straining mules, "Forget
The sentiment before you drown." Two fragrant
Mouths hummed no more.

Shoe the horse and shoe the mare:
We ain't going anywhere—
Only up and down the mud,
Where young lieutenants shed my blood
By reminding me of one
Whose smile is brighter than the sun
And his mother in whose eyes
Moonlight sings of clearing skies.

Shoe the mules and shoe the colts:
Every time this wagon jolts
My heart feels like a funeral bell
To toll the Yankees all to hell,
And I wish that I could lay my head
A softer place than in a wagon bed,
Where ammunition rides to war.
Christ, what is all this bangdeath for?

Willis Hyatt

Recently a teacher of eight grades in a little
One-room country school in southern Virginia, Willis
Hyatt followed the destinies of Stonewall Jackson
To please his girl—Mathilda Brooke, gray-eyed
Tomboy daughter of a local sharecropper. Old man
Brooke was mean as sin, especially when he had bent
His elbow too much on the applejack jug, but Matti
(So everyone called her, including Willis) was
Honeyfire in the veins of spring—lithe and sweet
As a spear of hay, with a kisspout mouth as ripely
Red as the heart of a melon, though her angry tongue
Could sting like a bumblebee. And if she could plow

A furrow straighter than any man and ride a great
Black stallion bareback (legs astraddle, skirts
Billowing, lean tawny knees flashing fierce light)
Down a whistling wind as she clutched the electricity
Of God in his shaggy mane, she could also sit
Quietly as grief and listen to the whisper of her
Soul as it spoke with everything newcome to green
Above the surface of the soil. This capacity for
Silence in her was religion, and this it was
Which drew her irresistibly to him who was the voice
Of eloquence within the village—shy, slender, gentle
Poet, Willis Hyatt. And so they fell in love,
And for a year he lived in daily ecstasy and poured
His heart out to her on hundreds of pages of neatly
Copied verse which made the cheep-cheep rhymes of
Imitative songsters in New England look like canary
Feathers beside the dazzling bonnet of a warring
Chief. For warring chief he was at twenty-six—
Waging mortal enmity with death: "If my sharp
flame
Of words can light the candle of all truth within
Your soul, then I'm content to die when God shall
Will, for love which sings must be forever sung."
And though she could not understand all that he
meant,
She felt the magic of his voice within her blood
And treasured every line he gave her with the vow
That if her father ever dared to lay his violent
Hands on Willis' poems, she'd kill him where he stood.
And like the humble wife of William Blake, she
turned
From darkness toward the light and every day found
More rapport with him who was the secret symbol of
All poems. When the noise of Sumter shook the South,
He said, "I suppose I ought to go." "Yes," she
Answered. "The gold and frankincense are in your
Lines—they need the bitterness of myrrh to give
Them the sharpness you would not taste before."
"A touch of hopeless Keats," he said. And then,
As though the first light of creation had rounded
Suns before his eyes, he saw she knew him better
Than he knew himself. "But I'll not play the forlorn
Role of Fanny Brawne—oh, Willis! Willis! marry me

Before you go!" "No," he said, after infinite ages
Of slow silent pain. "I will not leave you big
With child to wait for the ending of the world—
For you must know as well as I we cannot hope to win
This war, and what may happen in the months that
lie
Ahead, it's better we forget till I return."
But now this lyric Homer of the Jackson corps
Remembers what it is he would forget, and with
A shadow of regret upon his face, he wets a stubby
Pencil with his lips and huddles closer to a smoking
Fire that serves to dry his thicket-tattered uniform
Before he eases wearily between the oilcloths
And the blankets next his snoring pal. And now he
Writes most carefully within a thick ledgerbook
He carries with him everywhere—the safe for all
The poetry he sends to Matti when he finds the time
For letters home.

If somewhere up ahead
A Union bullet bears my name,
Do not make sentimental tags of love
To stick upon the coffin of my heart.
I marked each motion of your beauty once:
Let that be epitaph enough.

Bradley Carleton

Midnight, and the windy patter of rain from stirring
Leaves; midnight, and the neighing of horses tied
Somewhere out in the darkness; midnight,
And the croaking of frogs from the swollen swamps,
The clicking of crickets in the wet hedges of
Oppressive heat, the minor keying of mosquitoes
About sleeping heads, and the whirring of gnats
On uncovered faces; midnight, and Major Bradley
Carleton of the Virginia artillery cannot find
A dry bed on which to unlock the safe of his dreams.
He is tired, tireder than he knows; the stubble
Encircling his neat mustache is pesty with itch,
And his lean muscular legs under damp officer's gray
Complain of the recent work of chiggers. He
scratches,

Yawns, nibbles some hardtack, then speaks his mind
To a blanketmate captain, exhaustedly sipping a cup
Of the milk they had begged from a farmwife at noon.
"Right now I feel like the shortest verse in
The Bible: 'Jesus wept.' My God, what a day this
Has been! Eighteen hours up and the vanguard made
No more than six miles in the mud. And if we don't
Move faster tomorrow, Old Jack'll tax us all some
Hair." "That's for sure," the captain says.
"And from what they tell me, I guess our Stonewall
Hasn't slept in twenty years and just can't
Understand why human nature puts in so many demands
For rest." The major smiles and drinks a cup of
The milk. Then it's time for dreams. Soon
The captain, twenty-seven, golden handsome and father
Of two little girls, is sleeping in the gathering
Fog. "Perhaps," the wakeful major thinks, "because
What matters most in life has been fulfilled for him."
And aching from the blunted stabs of memory, Bradley
Carleton wishes something in himself were not
So incomplete. Sensitive son of a plantation owner,
With a flair for painting and an eye for the beautiful,
He had no sense for the business of earning a living.
To him, cotton and tobacco were either subjects for
Landscapes or the daily sources of sweat for animals
Dressed in bright rags who happened to bear human
Names. He hated the sweat, but he loved the animals.
Ever since he was a boy, he had responded to
The slaves with passionate joy, a fierce protective
Feeling for humility in chains and innocence
That sang the very heart out of his breast. (God,
God, a white man has never lived until he's heard
The Darkies crowning hyacinth Jesus with their ivory
Hymning in the fields of twilight.) And if his
Gentle mother understood that heart, she has been
Dead these fifteen years—deposited in earth for
Safer keeping from the puny rage of men who had
Invested wealth and war for no return of interest
From the Lord of poverty and peace. So when the time

For adult decision came and Brad had none to make,
His father, who was convinced the second son (Prince
George) was fitter heir to master all his lands,
Sent the misfit packing off to V. M. I. "Military
Life may make a man of our fair lady!" And Bradley
Learned, as best he could, the dull complexities
Of iron strife and woke a time or two
To the mysterious genius of Professor Jackson
And the maxims of his higher mathematics—
although
What he remembered best of all was some silly lines
The Old Man once had read in class:

I had a little pig
And I fed him on clover.
And when he died,
He died all over.

Then graduating into a world not yet at war,
He refused commissioning and borrowed money
From a kindly aunt to spend upon three years
Of law at the University of Virginia. When he
Had won several cases in court and seemed well
Established in a Richmond practice, his father
Relented and invited him home to broach the matter
Of marriage: "Irene Radcliffe—just think how
Your fortune will grow!" Brad took one look at
The milk-and-water damsel and smelled the curds
Of cottage cheese. From bachelor quarters he wrote:

Though I'm the son of a what of a which
And may play the dog at a flea-bitten hole,
I will not marry a respectable bitch
For her goddam mangy soul.

The family rupture was now complete. Still unwed
At twenty-nine, and not asleep (though it's one
O'clock), he wrestles in the dark Gethsemane
Of his love with the bright image of ripe-olive-colored
Agape, quadroon girl his mother reared to be her
Personal maid. Agape, his half first cousin by
Lecherous Grandpa Bradley on Mulatto Martha, Mrs.
Major Domo in his father's house. Agape (most

Blessed word in all St. Paul), three parts free
And one part slave, who runs the Carleton clan
Better than aging Martha can now that her eyes
Are cataracts. Agape, of his very age, strange
Cream-coffee portrait of his young mother, with
hands
As delicately boned as a maple leaf and dancing feet
That whisper of heaven to the waiting moon; Agape
Of the bell-rich prayer savored in the scent of roses;
Agape of the long black hair brushing the collar
Of his most white need as he taught her to read
And write; Agape, his only dream that moves
And breathes and does not die when dawn breaks cold
And ashen gray; Agape, who said, after he had
pressed
Her lips for the only time in the parting that now
Was this his agony: "I love you more than the starry
Sky." Agape—the major jerks bolt upright out of
The blankets; it is early morning, and the captain
Is brewing some tea. "Nightmare, Major?" "I don't
Know." "Well, you were muttering about how
somebody
Shouldn't cry."

If love between us two be sin,
Then let us pray somewhere within
The vast confines of hell
May dwell
A few worthy pioneers
Banqueting on others' fears.
If love between us two be sin.

If love between us two be wrong,
Then let us pray an April song
Of truth will rinse and wring
Each bird of spring
That prejudicial eyes may see
Such beauty knows not slave and free.
If love between us two be wrong.

If love between us two be right,
Then let us thank the God of night,
Who shelters us within His arm,
Safe from harm.

For though I've sought joy everywhere
The least white thread of my most soul
Is only whole
When twining in your long black hair.
And I shall bless you, precious one,
And wear your heart in me,
Until a very sober sun
Burns blisters on a drunken sea.

4. The Tiger Roars Too Soon

While his troops were slopping through the heavy
Rain of Tuesday, June 24, Stonewall stopped for
A time at the Henry Carter House, where he received
A message from General Lee, which read in part
As follows: "Maj. Gen. Jackson to be in position
On Wednesday night on Hanover Court House Road,
Or near that road, about half way between Half Sink
Bridge, and Hanover Court House . . . Gen. Jackson
Will commence his movement, precisely at 3 o'clock
Thursday morning, and the moment he moves, send
Messengers to Gen. Branch, who will immediately
move
Himself . . ." Such was the plan of the commander,
But, like most plans of mice and men, it went
astray—
As the Scotch-Irish lover of Bobbie Burns could have
Predicted, now that he saw his corps far out
In a strange jungle, falling steadily behind
The schedule, and with no help at all from leaden
Skies. And to make the assignment more difficult,
That night General Lee gave him a longer route;
Then the column-driving brigadier, Richard Taylor
(Son of President Zachary), came down with swamp
Fever, with such severe pains in head and loins
That he found it impossible to mount and could
Scarcely comprehend messages. As Jim, the negro
Slave, applied cold packs to the stomach of his
Master next morning, he said in a tone of uncommon
Concern, "You feels powerful warm, General
Jackson,

Sir." "Too much zeal to get at the enemy," Stonewall
Replied, but his eyes held a darkness that had little
To do with the drizzle outside. "I command you
To say nothing of this to anyone." Jim obeyed,
But he knew: The Boss had a touch of that devil
fever.
In fact, the whole corps seemed touched with fever:
Sleepy and slow, the brigades were not marching
In order till an hour after sunrise, but the dawn
Was so damply dark that perhaps they didn't know
When it came—though the moralist Dabney was
certain
Enough of the cause of delay: the officers had spent
Too much of the night in julep-drinking. Yet once
Underway, the men found that the roads were better,
In spite of the steady drizzle and the stifling
Heat, and Stonewall, wet, weary, half-sick, drove
Them twenty miles with all the pent-up fury of
Frustration. By nightfall, late, behind schedule,
With seven crucial miles still to go before he crossed
The Virginia Central, the general finally surrendered
To discretion and let his exhausted gray hordes
Encamp at Ashland. "I dare not push them any
further,"
He said to an aide, "lest they fall out of ranks
By full regiments." Thus flesh and blood are
A curbing bit in the mouth of the wild stallion
Of genius. And the eagle of war may fly
No higher than the burden he carries permits.

Sunset and the Valley troops are cheering
As they pass their bearded idol, stiffly seated
On grass-cropping Sorrel, his cadet cap low, all
But hiding his face. He is talking with a knight
In elegant gray, with black ostrich plume jauntily
Stuck in the band of his soft cocked hat, pinned
Up on one side for chicness and an added touch
To the panache; finely grained leather boots stretch
With scarcely a wrinkle up to the thighs. It is
Beauty Stuart, merry of mouth, lovely of limb,
Dashing of dream; twenty-nine-year-old chief
Of the cavalry, proud as a peacock of his recent
Ride round the whole Union army. Beside such svelte

Splendor, the eagle looks like a rag-picker, but he
Loves the peacock like a brother, though he knows
How to pluck a few gaudy feathers now and then
From the train of the smarter, younger bird.
Sunset and the Valley troops are cheering
Their homely idol—among them, Lieutenant Ronald
Sandford, who accounts himself blest at the sight
Of these contrasts together; an impression, he thinks,
To live in his memory long after the battles are
Forgotten. And if he brings his company to present-
Arms before the captain can give the command
And then hurrahs more loudly than the rest, perhaps
Sober-eyed historians will forgive him his boyish
Enthusiasm for a man and a cause that failed.
This moment of tribute is one of the happiest
In his oh, so young life, and he has too few
Heartbeats of joy left in his body. Sunset
And the Valley troops are cheering, but their idol
Now motions an aide to his side with a flick of
The wrist: "Sir, there shall be no more
demonstrations
Among the men. I don't want every Yankee scout
In the neighborhood to know where we are—pass
The word for silence in the ranks!" Then he resumes
His conversation in mid-sentence with Stuart,
But there is a quaver in the high-pitched voice,
And his eyes glow brighter than usual for a time.
Then darkness gathers as Stuart says, "The Union
Cavalry have already driven in my pickets,
And the telegraph lines out of Ashland have been
cut."
"And I, sir, am still far short of my objective,"
Says Jackson. Then he slams a fist into an open
Palm: "We must sweat early tomorrow or bleed later
On." Night but the Valley troops are not cheering.

Nor were the brigadiers when they came to report
And found their commander in a testy mood—Major
Dabney, with his usual primness, thought Old Jack
"Scarcely courteous," but the reverend, still
Feverish, had been ordered to move the starting
Time to 2:30 next morning in place of Lee's
Scheduled three—enough to make any sickly
preacher

Overcritical. As for Stonewall, all he said
To those beneath him was, "Gentlemen, you must
have
Your men cook and be ready to start at dawn."
But when General Winder answered with the only
Unforgivable word in Jackson's vocabulary—
"Impossible!"—even though he hastened to qualify
Himself with factual excuse ("My baggage train is
Far back")—the eagle froze him with an icy stare
More eloquent than torrents of steaming abuse
Of which his executive little jaybird was a master.
After the cold blade of contemptuous silence had
Hollowed out the underling's insides, Stonewall
Hissed unmistakable command: "Sir, it must be
done!"

Though the categorical imperative does exist
(Compliments of the dense literary style of
Philosopher I. Kant—surely the strangest name
Imaginable for the genius of I Must) and did exist
For the one invincible soldier of the South, yet men
Not eager to play the role of gods will do their
Worst to ease away from its most stern demands.
And on Thursday, June 26, the army of the Valley
Proved true to this observation, for Stonewall
Jackson, after cold packs on his hot aching flesh,
Prayed on sharply protesting knees for victory
Through speed—only to find, with swollen streams,
Burnt bridges, and blue serpentining lines of
Countless Yankees before him, that his force was
Playing slugabed in the early rising heat. Long
After sunrise, ragged files of men still stood
In line about the wells of Ashland. In spite of
Recent rains, water was scarce, and the blazing
Sun promised to turn the vapor-spiraling countryside
Into a Turkish bath. But with their commander up
And out, lean breakfasted, feeling somewhat better
For a longer sleep than usual, and driving rapid
Orders home, by eight o'clock the hungry columns
Were marching over baking mud on Ashcake Road.
At 9:30, some six hours late, the vanguard crossed
The Virginia Central, and Stonewall, obeying Lee,
Sent a note to General Branch, far down the right,

Advising him of the juncture. Enemy scouts pecked
Noisily away at the advancing front—a sign
Of stiff resistance farther on.

With every drybrush crackle of thin rifle fire,
The timid rabbit that was Roger Tecknor's heart
Jumped and kicked thump-thump against his ribs.
Sweat poured in channels from his armpits and his
Groin, and he seemed to walk on water, ever fearful
Of the loss of that last ounce of faith that kept
Him yet from drowning in a sea of dark hysteria.
Though he drank continually from his cypress-wood
Canteen (one more detail to set him apart from
His fellow Johnnies), his hand shook so much
That his shirt front was wetter than the back,
And his lips were parched, his tongue a cottoned
Glue. Half a dozen times he broke from ranks
To replenish his supply at roadside springs and
wander
Deeper into thickets for the nervous dribble of
Small urination. Each time his hope to straggle
Free of death proved vain, for always barked
The watchdog voice of the sergeant or the captain:
"Close it up, men, close it up! Hey, you there
In the brush, get the hell out here on the double!"
No, if red-handed Murder waited up ahead,
His Argus-eyed henchmen would make sure that he,
Roger Tecknor, microcosm of all misery, was not
Forgotten. God, how he despised the brutal jokes
On how the sun would dry his diapers if he didn't
Make it! Ignoramuses who had no feeling for
The finer things of life, who had to throw their
Meager breath away on dunghill humor—beasts
Who frothed at mouth because, too stupid to read
Or write themselves, they had to show superiority
Over him—him who loved French poetry and could
Quote Plato by the page in the original Greek!
Ah, how crueler than cruel they were to laugh at
him—
Especially now that his legs were so rotten with
Some rare disease of the swamps (the closer he got
To the enemy, the more convinced he became of his
Strange and sudden illness) that he could scarcely

Muster strength enough to lay one feeble foot
In front of the other. But he would show them,
Show them all some day—why, if this unique identity
That was his economic genius were ever lost
To the South by some heroic sacrifice upon the field
Of honor, then the very structure of the Confederate
Victory would collapse from lack of him to help
Reconstruct prosperity in peace! But as the rat
Of his untruth clawed and bit inside, some cold
Scrap of mind reflecting on his mind said simply,
"You're afraid, so much afraid you'd better keep
Your buttocks tight." And as he swallowed unshed
Tears of bitter impotence, he said most humbly
To himself, "I know it, and I will."

I cannot roll a stone in my mouth
And conserve on the water supply,
For I'm the biggest fool in the South
Who was ever afraid to die.

Soon, too soon, the cannon will cough,
And maggots of noise will squirm in my head,
And my guts will come to a big drop-off—
God, would I not be better dead?

No, No, he told himself: better to walk a living
Death than lie a bloody broken sack of rags and bones,
With flies crawling into his shattered mouth—
An image too often repeated for the benefit
Of his nausea in the Valley. And so the fear of fear
Forced him into something like calm attention
As he passed the Henry Clay House. Then since he
Had not heard the crack of rifles for a while,
He found the courage to expatiate upon the glories
Of this statesman of the Old South—and all
For the sake of the illiterates. For his eulogy
He got: "Listen to Roger the Dodger, boys—by Jesus,
You'd think he was runnin' for the next session
Of the Yankee Congress." "Oh, he's good at runnin'
All right—ain't you, Roger?" "Save your breath,
Fatty, you'll need it to blow out Union fires."
The captain finally restored silence in the ranks,
But not before a grabbing hand had sent peals of
Whooping laughter ringing down the road. Poor

Tecknor waddled on with girlish curses eating at
The broad lean backs of glad obedience. On trudged
The Rebel columns—past the home of Dr. Shelton,
Where their patriarch of thunder held brief
Conference with the cavalier on what resistance
Lay ahead. By three o'clock the vanguard reached
Totopotomoy Creek and drove off the blue cavalry.
Plumes of bright terror rose in Roger Tecknor's
Bugging eyes: a bridge was burning and a Federal
Battery was hurling whistling death at him. He
Welcomed with a lover's joy the command to break
For cover. Tangled deep in vines, he flattened out
On soggy earth, raised his rifle against advancing
Trees and waited for the ending of the world.
It didn't come. Instead, the wild commander
Who cared so little for the value of a human life
(Of this Tecknor was certain) galloped up the road
To find the cause of all this noise. Stonewall
Jackson did not want the Union guns to launch
The gray divisions on his flank into a premature
Attack. To Colonel Johnson of the Marylanders,
Who had doused the flames with water from the
creek,
He said, "What's that firing?" "The enemy,"
The colonel answered, "with guns and skirmishers
In the thicket." "Why don't you stop them?"
"We can't do it without charging or shelling."
The general eyed the colonel in such a way
As to indicate that if he heard another *can't* today
He'd place the entire army under arrest. Then he
Said, "Sir, you must stop that firing. Make them
Keep quiet." Johnson ordered up the Baltimore
Artillery: a few well-directed salvos,
And the bottleneck was broken. Once more the
Johnny
Tide advanced, and when Roger Tecknor flushed
Himself from cover, he found, to his amazement,
That he still could breathe.

Though Stonewall did his best to keep the divisions
On his right from swinging the handle of the scythe
Before the blade was in position, his best failed.
The forward units of his executive officer's

Brigades nearly fired on General Branch's well-
Dressed Yankee-looking North Carolinians.
That they did not fire was little to their credit,
For in the juncture which followed neither Ewell
Nor Branch informed either Jackson or Lee
Of the contact. And so the massive iron gate,
Which the eagle had envisioned being slammed to
keep
The enemy outside the high walls of the
Confederacy,
Was in danger of fulfilling both his fears—coming
Unhinged and breaking down the middle. Military
Authorities can debate from now until the last taps
Of time on all the if's, and there are many to satisfy
Their passionate curiosity for details: if Lee's
Strategy had not been so unwieldy on the tactical
Level, if the Valley troops had not been given
So much ground to cover in so short a while, if there
Had only been more accurate maps and less ignorance
Of terrain, if Stonewall himself had not been
Groggy from a touch of fever and an abundant lack
Of sleep—still all the if's must coalesce in one
Sad point of undeniable fact: Major General A. P.
Hill simply jumped the gun. Impatient over the delay,
At three o'clock, while the Baltimore Artillery was
Silencing the Federal guns at Totopotomoy,
The irrepressible red head ordered his men to cross
The Chickahominy and storm their way into
Mechanicsville, in direct violation of Lee's plan,
For Hill was not to move until Jackson signaled
With heavy cannonade that he was in position.
The Tiger's only excuse for unsynchronizing
The complete attack was that he opened his own
Offensive "rather than hazard the failure of
The whole plan by longer deferring it." Thus he
Forced his commander to cast for the fish that were
McClellan and his army with a net only half open
And partly out of water. And for a week that net
Was never to fully open and close on the great
Haul it might have captured otherwise.
Picture now five spokes of a giant wheel—all
Centering in the hub of the tiny town Mechanicsville.
Longstreet and D. H. Hill anchor on the southwest

Spoke; A. P. Hill drives down the northwest spoke,
On through the hub, and out to the eastern rim;
Branch and Gregg, who follow, squeeze themselves
Inside the other three spokes, just east of the hub.
Later, far out on the circumference of the wheel,
Along Beaver Dam Creek, from north to south stretch
The thin lines of A. P. Hill's brigades (Anderson,
Archer, Field, Fender, and Ripley) to face General
Porter's Union corps. Far to the north and in no
Position to yield support, the Valley army moves
In ignorance of the violent catastrophe of
This evening. At dusk, the frantic Hill tries
A flank attack, and sends the brigades of Ripley
And Pender charging into solid walls of flame.
His losses are so heavy that the laconic statement
Of the owl seems more than mere litotes: "A bloody
And disastrous repulse." On the exposed slope of
The Rebel charge, two thousand men fall "like flies
In a bowl of sugar"; nearly every officer in
The storming lines is blown to Valhalla; one Georgia
Regiment ceases to exist. By nine o'clock the futile
Dying has ended, and the winking lanterns of
The stretcher bearers make a mimic heaven on
The groaning field of night. And if Roger Tecknor
Can thank the actual stars for his having seen
No more than minor skirmishing this day,
His commander, when informed of the folly of A. P.
Hill, has only a bitter thought to chew upon:
"The tiger roared too soon." Nor does he suck
The least comfort from such bitterness, as lesser
Men will do, by knowing that his fears proved
Prophets. Meanwhile in another tent of war,
His brother-in-law moans, "The hooded falcon cannot
Strike the quarry." Let history ponder that a while.

5. The Death Of Ronald Sandford

During the night Federal troops on Jackson's front
Pulled back from Beaver Dam Creek; the morning of
Friday, June 27, found Stonewall in hot pursuit.
Jeb Stuart routed the Pennsylvania Lancers and
drove

Off annoying pickets. But after a conference with
Lee near a little church east of the creek, Stonewall
Let his secrecy misdirect him. Finding a guide
Native to the region, the general said, with typical
Reserve: "This army wants to march to Old Cold
Harbor." The guide, a master of Euclid, ignored
The *Old* and led the Valley columns four miles
Straight south into the swampland: after all,
The shortest distance between two points was
The greatest service he could render to the cause
Of victory. But when Old Jack came within earshot
Of the guns, he started: the sound was wrongly
Placed. "Where is that firing?" he demanded.
"About Gaines' Mill," said the guide, punctuating
His certainty with a spit of tobacco. "Does this
Road lead by there?" "Why, yes, General," the guide
Said chewingly. "By there to Cold Harbor—that's
Where you want—" "But I do *not* want to go to
Gaines' Mill; I want to go to Cold Harbor, coming
In so that the Mill is on the *right*." "Well, I'll
Be hanged, General!" (The guide was unaware of
The fact that if the general had not been more
At fault than he, he might well have become the
sorry
Subject of his own favorite expression.) "Well,
I'll be hanged! Why in tarnation didn't you say so
At first? We should've taken that east fork way
Back yonder!" *Way back yonder* meant the delay of
An hour or more—a delay that could bring disaster
To the rest of Lee's waiting army, so a fussy aide,
Who saw a chance to needle his superior, was quick
To point out. "No," said Stonewall, "let us trust
That the providence of God will so overrule that no
Mischief will result." What mischief worse than
The casualties which occurred that day it is hard
To imagine.

While the commander was busy erasing his error,
His exec led the brigades of Taylor, Trimble,
And Arnold into the woods of confusion. With no
Idea of direction, men wandered like Little Red
Riding Hood straight toward the flank of A. P. Hill
And the Union wolves, who lay in ambush, not in

Grandma's House, but along a formidable ridge
In the wilderness, between the desperate roars of
The tiger at bay and the swirling waters of
The Chickahominy. Any kind of Rebel charge
At the Yankees was cerain death. At least that's
How the discreet Maryland troops interpreted
The situation, for they gathered near a clearing
To collect their mail. But the lisping jaybird had
Another notion of valor and sent his lines crashing
Over a field of stubble, where men fell in the dying
Sun like red leaves of autumn cut by a ghostly
Legion of hail . . .

Ronald Sandford keened his lungs to the bright lance
Of shrill thunder and rallied his men in a cloud
Of dust on the third assault at the Federal position.
This was life in an instant so sharp with ecstasy
That it cut him free from the past and the future
To achieve sublime identity of forever Now. This
Was glory so really big that all ambition of home-
Staying youth shrank to dwarfish ugliness
In the vision of tall-skying war. This was his
Destiny with God and Country, swelling his heart
Out over the clod-kicking earth and the smoke-
puffing
Cannon until it encompassed a universe of gray
In the bloody flags of terror-loosing courage.
This was himself challenging more fiercely than
Locomotives, running more massively than
mountains,
Hating more hellishly than Satan—oh, how he'd
shatter
The goddam Yankee formations and drive them all
like
Swine into the drowning gulfs of falling night!

All day I've marched in the woods of lost,
Clawed by cockleburs, stung by flies,
And now the Yankees will pay the cost
Of pain under the crimsoning skies.

Let their cannon belch and their rifles crack,
My heart is the song of a liberty bell:

Before my ringing steel they'll all turn back
And stampede home to their Northern hell.

(A sudden noise exploded in his head,
And light a billion powers brighter than the sun;
Then awful silence whispered he was dead,
And he found that playing soldier wasn't fun.)

While Ronald Sandford lay in the stubbled field
And couldn't cry for the mercy of the stretcher
Bearers, because the pulped plum that was once
His handsome face had landed fifty yards from where
His body fell, his idol Stonewall Jackson sucked
A lemon and watched the dulce-et-decorum dying
In the twilight as his military mind shaped a grim
Plan for putting the enemy to final rout.
As darkness walked across the east, scattering
A first few pale stars, Dick Ewell led one last
Charge against the Federal ridge and forced
The desperate men in blue into retreat. His boss
Turned to meet with General Lee upon a road.
"Ah, I am very glad to see you," said the older
Warrior. Then with gentle sarcasm for the Valley
Hero's tardiness: "I had hoped to be with you before
Now." Stonewall understood the silken reprimand
And mumbled inaudible self-disgust. "That fire
Is very heavy," Lee said, his courtly soul sorrowing
For all the legal murder going on about him. "Do
You think your men can stand it?" Jackson bristled
And his eyes flashed: "They can stand almost
anything.
They can stand that." "Those people's right flank
Looks ripe for the picking," said Lee. "Right flank
It is!" And Jackson galloped off through pine groves
And swamp thickets to hurl the thunderbolt he had
Already fashioned for his plan. His order to
The brigadiers was simple and direct: "This affair
Has hung in the balance long enough; sweep the field
With the bayonet." Sweep it they did, but for no
Small outlay of capital in blood: where Hood broke
The back of Union resistance, 600 of the First
Texas' 800 fell, and the Fourth Texas lost so many
Officers that it ended up in the command of a captain.

But so much Confederate death and mutilation was
Of little comfort to the mob of panic-stricken
Yankees surging over the Chickahominy, too terrified
To stop in the safety of darkness and purchase cool
Lemonade for hot thirst from the negro boys seeking
Profit from defeat—and so those buckets were
Destined for the less-in-a-hurry members of
The Federal hospital corps. Oh, fabulous lemonade
Of the Peninsula Campaign, why has no poet chanted
A song of praise for you? You make more sense
Than all the Memorial Day speeches.

While Ronald Sandford lay untended by the stretcher
Bearers, because they knew no medic in the Southern
Army could do anything for a headless man, his idol
Stonewall Jackson frightened twenty Yankee soldiers
Into surrendering to him. Then he ordered Beauty
Stuart to advance at dawn and take the White House;
And the little Napoleon too, should he be so foolish
As to remain in his untenable headquarters.
At the last, in conference with Lee at Selwyn, home
Of the Hogans, he counted up the casualties: 3,700
Of his own division. Among the dead were Colonels
Seymour, Fulkerson, and Allen. General Elzey still
Bled from the head. But General Lee, who was
Responsible for everything in aggregate, counted
To 8,000: ten colonels dead, many others wounded.
And yet in all the dark statistics it is not recorded
Anywhere that your bright young name was
    mentioned,
Ronald Sandford. And as you wait for burial,
McClellan pens a letter to Secretary Stanton
That history will remember long after your sheer
Heroism is forgotten dust: "I know now the full
History of the day. Our men did all that men could
Do, but they were overwhelmed by vastly superior
Numbers. I again repeat that I am not responsible
For this, and I say it with the earnestness of
A general who feels in his heart the loss of every
Brave man who has been needlessly sacrificed today.
If I save this army now, I tell you plainly that I
Owe no thanks to you or any other persons in
Washington. You have done your best to sacrifice

This army." Thus the melodrama of mediocrity always
Shifts the blame to others that the self may not
Have to face facts and admit that the failure does
Not spring from betrayed genius. And it is well
You cannot speak out from the grave, Ronald Sandford,
For you would surely ask the commander of the Union
Army how a bombproof in Washington could sacrifice
Anything. No, let the letter stand as hysterical
Witness to the truth: man would rather die than
Think. At least you found it so, Ronald Sandford.

6. Aftermath Of The Battle At Gaines' Mill

Winslow Adams, survivor of death,
Had fought two hours for every breath
That kept his lucky gamble going
Unbroken in fields where men were mowing
Each other down with fantastic skill.
Though he didn't relish the taste of kill,
He stabbed a beardless Yank through the throat
(The blood pumped thickly wet on his coat)
And clubbed another one over the head
With his rifle butt till the man lay dead.
(A fractured smile and a gurgling cry,
And crimson eyes blind to the evening sky.)
Something about his devil-may-care
Had held him safe from the murdering air
That blew so fierce with flame and noise
To silence the hearts of screaming boys,
Caught by the truant officer War
That they might play their hooky no more,
Far from mother, father, and wife.
(What stern arrests on such merry life!)
And Winslow Adams now feels in his soul
("If I had a soul, I've lost that soul.")
That the only reason why he's whole
Is because when a man doesn't pray to live,
His flesh has nothing of value to give
To the ridiculous gods of glory.

"And that, as I see it, is my true story,"
He yawns to the scrap of moon in the night.
" 'A rich man's war and a poor man's fight'—
That's what they say, but as for me,
Adventure's the one big opportunity
I have before I cash my dwindling chips."
Then he puts a cup of water to his lips
And munches a solid biscuit or two.
"But this I know—that I won't be through
Until I beg the swift sun in flight
To stop and shed some extra light."

Alone, alone, all alone on earth,
Without any family ties,
And the only breath I've brought to birth
Is in the cast of the dice.

The love-forsaken joy of the win
Is all I have ever known,
And a pricetag kiss from the lips of sin
That turns the blood to stone.

Hunger I've felt and burning thirst,
And the shivering spasm of lust;
But the game of hearts never saw me first
To trump angelic dust.

So why should a drifting fellow like me,
Exiled from heaven and hell,
Worry that stars may rise from the sea
And sing his funeral knell?

Then Winslow Adams yawns once more
And tries to forget the ghosts of war.
Snug in the blankets, he hides his face
And turns to dream of the buried ace,
While mosquitoes whine in the night.
But his sleep is whittled to splinters of light,
Filtering down through the soggy wool
From a lantern held by Tommy Roule,
The nineteen-year-old pimple-faced kid,
Who saw everything that Adams did
But couldn't quite bring himself to commit:
"Corporal, sir, can you help me a bit?"

The voice is urgent and nervously high.
Winslow rouses and blinks at the sky,
Washed with the milk of pre-dawn overhead.
"What's the matter?" "My brother, sir. He's dead,
I think. As we hit the Yankee right,
For a while I was able to keep him in sight—
Then the fighting got bad and I fell flat,
And a shell exploded, and after that
I couldn't see him any more. And I've been
To the hospital stations, and they all let me in,
And Walter just ain't anywhere to be found."
"Then take your lantern and cover the ground
Where you saw him last—and let me sleep!"
Then suddenly the kid begins to weep:
His salt tears spatter on Adams' face,
And the gambler forgets his buried ace.
(Dear Christ, he isn't a soldier of stone.)
"I'm afraid, sir, afraid to find him alone."
"Well, I'm not your *sir*, and don't you fret:
He's a healthy prisoner of war, I'll bet,
Or if he's wounded—we'll save him yet."
But the cardshark loses his gallant bet,
For among the windrows of the Rebel slain,
They find the place where Walter has lain,
Minus both legs, through the slow-footed night.
A gouge of earth he had squeezed in his right
Hand, as though to ease the enormous pain
Before he died. And Tommy's whole world falls apart
In the sobbing fragments of his shattered heart,
As he buries his grief on the blood-stained coat
Of the gambler, who feels in his too-tight throat
A bird beating wings of a curse at the gods above,
Who have torn his luck with the agony of love.

That morning, instead of swift pursuit on the Federal
Force, General Lee let his army stand in line
For the slow details of burying the dead
And attending the wounded: scalpel and spade
Completed the work of Yankee cannon and rifle shot.

Willis Hyatt had shoveled dirt
Till every bone in his body hurt
From the skeleton rattle of death.

As he straightened to catch his breath
And rub the kinking out of his back,
He thought of Matti astride the black
Stallion, playing tag with the wind.
Then a chinless private grinned
Up at him from the gaping hole
That was once his face, and the soul
Of the dead man seemed to say:
"All this labor and what's the pay?
Though the earth opens wide for me today,
Tomorrow the same mouth yawns for you."
The poet saw it was true was true,
And the cup he drank was bitter rue.
Then a ghostly strain of the past blew in,
And a terrible cry began to din
In his head: "Why didn't we sin?
Why didn't we eat of the stolen fruit
Of love, that passionate brute
Who ignores convention with blinded eyes
To gambol the hills of Paradise?
Why didn't we give the more than much
That is the ecstasy of touch?
Why didn't we fuse in the crime
Of our flesh? Know you not that time
Makes lovers walk the same path
As the army of running wrath?—
Two varying gaits to the one end."
Then private death whispered, "My friend,
Why trouble yourself? She knew, she knew,
But the question is: did you? did you?
You who saw your honor so?"
And Willis Hyatt answered, "No."
"Then learn from me you bury today,
For I have something more to say:
Though all must come to this dark place,
Here love shall wear a brighter face
Than war. Though her evil may be great,
The sins of love are less than those of hate:
The greatest crime of violent bliss
Is innocence compared with this
Which drops me down an early grave—
Know yourself, my friend, and save
Some thread of joy from the waiting knife."

"But I could have had her for my wife.
Why, oh why, did I delay?"
"Your silly conscience ran astray
To hear the bugled lies of iron strife
Drowning out the purposes of life."
Then the captain shouted, "Dig away!
Dammit, men, don't take all day!"
And Willis Hyatt shoveled dirt
Till every dream of duty hurt.

Sam Stover had gone to his captain at dawn,
And the captain had gone to the colonel: it seemed
A shame to bury the shoes—especially since thousands
Walked on ill-shod feet. The colonel agreed,
Praised the captain for his fine idea, and hugged
The glory to himself when he reported the saving
Of leather to Stonewall. The captain gave Sam
A box of cigars, and the sergeant clucked at his
Mules and took a detail to fill the wagons.
But Old Jack was not to be fooled by a bird
On a collar: he sifted the report and made a note
Of the man. On his return from a ride to littered
Remains of the spot where Hood had struck ("The men
Who carried this position were soldiers indeed!")—
He astonished the blacksmith from Atlanta
With a personal interview: "Sergeant, you are to be
Commended. This army needs more resourceful people
Like you." "Thank you, General Jackson, sir."
Sam's face went red as his wet bandanna; he twisted
His forage cap in the vice of his hands. Something
Had made him want to uncover. "I have sent General
Ewell's division to Bottom's Bridge, where I hear
The Yankee stores are rich to be had. Do you think
You could salvage some fresh supplies for my famished
Troops?" Sam Stover swelled his massive chest
In a salient of pride. "You bet I can, sir!"
"Good man—Major Douglas, write up the order. Take
Whatever wagons and men you will need and be back
With the spoils by sundown." "Yes, sir!" Stonewall
Turned to ride. "Oh, General Jackson, sir." "Yes?"

"Thank you very much." "What for, Sergeant?"
The eagle's eyes were mild. "For being the greatest
Commander in this here army." The general smiled.
"I shall always cherish the name of Stover."
Then he was gone in a thunder of hoofs. Sam sat
In a trance till the big-eyed lieutenant nudged him:
"You heard the order." "I sure did," said Sam,
"But I still can't believe it." "Then read it."
Sam stared at the paper the major had given him.
"Huddup, you beautiful hayburners!"

Sundown and the wagons groan
With their heavy freight
For three hundred yards behind;
Sundown and the owls moan
I'm going to be late,
But I don't take it so unkind.
I own a happy memory:
Stonewall Jackson smiled at me.

There are tons of dried beans and peas,
Figs and apricots too;
Jars of jam and pickled pigs' feet,
And sacks of coffee, if you please;
Fresh onions for the company stew,
And rashers of smoked meat—
Food enough and plenty for all,
But the very best thing is to recall
I own a happy memory:
Stonewall Jackson smiled at me.

While Sam Stover was singing his way through
The twilight, with a touch of Yankee medicine on
His breath, Dr. Butler Wade reeled out of
The operating tent and staggered past a hill of arms
And legs—many had been the cause of screams more
Wild than a woman's in delivery, especially after
The anesthetics had run out: a slug of whiskey
And a bite on a bullet were poor defense against
The red marauders of marrow-sucking excruciation.
A whippoorwill cried to his mate, and the young
Surgeon stood listening in a clump of pines: call
Of life to life under the rising stars, call of love
To love as the ambulances creaked on the roads

To Richmond, call of the sane to the sane while
Madness roamed the muggy swamps seeking to maim
That which was sound. The tangy scent of the trees
Was welcome relief from the stench of death, waiting
For the least miscue in the hideous drama of lop
And stitch. And the lyric of the bird helped ease
The suffering of a soul seared with the shrieks
And whimpers of hell. "Here, Captain." An orderly
Broke the doctor's revery and handed him a cup
Of steaming coffee—the tenth since midnight.
"Well, I guess it's over now." Wade looked at
The man with dull metallic eyes. "No," he sighed.
"It has only begun." And he thought: Only God
Almighty knows when it will end. "Tell the major
I'll be with him in a minute." Then as he savored
The coffee, too tired to think of food, a dusty
Rider with a torn sleeve on his cavalry coat drew
Rein by the clump of pines. "Dr. Wade?" "Yes.
What can I do for you?" "Nothing, sir. It's what
I can do for you—compliments of cousin Hampton."
The lieutenant handed him a sack of hard-boiled eggs,
Fresh bread, bacon, desiccated vegetables,
And a canteen of buttermilk. "Thank my illustrious
Relative and tell him these good things may help
Save the lives of a few amputees. He'll know."

Cut and sew, cut and sew,
That is all I do.
Cut and sew, cut and sew,
To save a pitiful few.

And for what? I ask myself
By the sunken sun—
To tag and stow upon a shelf
Marked: Dolls Who Cannot Run?

Or: Dolls Who Cannot Hold
Love Within Their Arms?
God, God, the night is cold
With murder's fire alarms.

And so it was, for during the exhausting journey
From darkness to darkness that was Dr. Wade's day
In surgery, dust clouds had hung over the lowlands:

McClellan's army was on the move. "Where?" General
Lee asked himself. Was the little Napoleon driving
His troops down the peninsula toward Yorktown?
Or was he pulling back toward the James River
To change his line of assault on the Confederate
Capital? The Commander of the Army of Northern
Virginia had decided that the latter strategy was
More likely. Reports of scouts confirmed his guess,
And he immediately set about laying plans to trap
The invasion force in or near White Oak Swamp.

7. The Southern Pursuit Of McClellan

While Federal troops plunged ammunition-loaded
Locomotives over a broken bridge into
The Chickahominy—exploding boilers and geysering
Tornadoheads of thunder over the sluggish river—
Father Charles Martel said Sunday Mass in a quiet
Tent of early morning for an exhausted congregation
Of twelve. The soldier-priest was near collapse
Himself—all night he had heard confessions of
Dying men, administered Extreme Unction, and
prayed
For the souls of mutilated sheep not of his pasture.
With every touch of the Viaticum on swollen tongues,
He had felt the iron scream of nails within his
Palms and the prickly lights of nauseating thorn
Behind his eyes. While dawn elevated a chalice
Of blood above the purple altar of the east, he had
Knelt before a bearded youth, with auburn hair
And face of yellow white ivory, who whispered
Through pale blue lips, "I thirst." "Miserere me,
Deus," the priest had said to the cry of crucifixion
In his soul. And when he placed his canteen to
The smiling mouth, the Rebel Christ who had spoken
The need of amputated flesh was dead. Now as he
Extends the Sacred Host armslength above his head
And hears the tinkle of a silver bell, swung by
The hairy hand of a leaden-eyed Creole, Father
Charles Martel says once again, "Miserere me, Deus."
His God was dying over and over in the brutal

Sacrifice of war, and he was finding that his mother
Had told him true: "Once you become a priest, my
son,
The pain of Calvary will be your daily bread."
So it was, but for the glory of that agonizing feast,
He beats his breast and says, "Domine, non sum
dignus."

Mother, Mother, once you said
When I became a priest
I'd have to leave life's wedding feast
And banquet with the dead—

The Saviour Lord we little men
Murder with our selfish will,
The gentle God of Love we hate and kill
And resurrect to kill again.

Now I see that you were right:
Life to me is death in Him,
Who bleeds and bleeds that every sin
May darken toward the Light.

Later that morning Stuart's cavalry troopers enjoyed
A field day with Union loot: they made lemonade
By the barrel and citrused their horses, ate kegs
Of Easter eggs roasted in the scuttling fires of
The enemy, reeled about drunk on fine wines
And liquors—till Fitzhugh Lee spread the rumor:
POISONED. But worst of all for the cause of
The South and a mark of the narrow vision of cavalier
Jeb, they fired cannon all day into the boilers of
The remaining locomotives. An act of wanton
Destruction which, for want of a stronger word,
Can only be called *stupid.* Confederate armies were
Never to have enough of the materiel necessary
To wage offensive war to final victory: foodstuffs
Rotted in depot after depot from lack of
Transportation, while Rebel bellies growled empty
At the front. Already the slow strangulation has
Begun: little steel for replacement of rails, too few
Trains to supply the hungry engine of battle—
And now Yankee gifts are refused for the sake of
Noise and boasting celebration. No wonder the eagle

Feels the peacock needs some tail feathers plucked:
He is too dandy a spectrum against the stern back-
drop
Of gray. Meanwhile Stonewall rode to Trent House,
McClellan's abandoned headquarters, but as his men
Failed to repair and cross Grapevine Bridge in time
To help General Magruder, the Confederate action
At Savage's Station was a piecemeal affair. Jackson
Excused his tardiness by saying, "I have other
Important duty to perform." So had Longstreet
And A. P. Hill, for they held their divisions
In reserve all day and waited for events to happen.
But for those who wait, delay is all that happens.
Thus General Lee's plan to trap the retreating
Yankees fell asleep in the bored yawns of a lazy
Sabbath, and the Northern arrow of escape flew
Straight for the target of the James without
A Southern shield of valor being raised to stop it.
Dawn and Stonewall Jackson stands before a campfire
Drying his clothes—he has been up since midnight:
A cloudburst over the peninsula was poor aid to his
Sleep in the open. Dawn and Stonewall Jackson
Remembers his 3:30 promise to Magruder: his col-
umns
Will be moving at daylight. Dawn and Stonewall
Jackson rides toward White Oak Swamp Bridge,
anxious
Over the costly delay in pursuit: the net may not
Close on the floundering fish of the North. Sunup
And Colonel Munford comes to report. "Colonel,"
Says Stonewall Jackson, "my orders to you were to be
Here at sunrise." The sweating cavalryman is fifteen
Minutes late. "I am sorry, General, but my men are
Out of provisions, and the storm last night conspired
Against my promptness." "Yes, sir. But, Colonel,
I ordered you to be here at sunrise. Move on with
Your regiment. If you meet the enemy, drive in
His pickets, and if you want artillery, Colonel
Crutchfield will furnish you." Sunup and Munford
Leads on with a handful of troopers; the bird of
His excuse has had its wings clipped by the sharp
Blades of the eagle's stars. Sunup and two couriers
Ride from the general to tell Colonel Munford,

"Your men are straggling badly." Sunup
And the cavalry leader rides back to the boss
To impress him once more with the difficulties.
"Yes, sir. But I ordered you to be here at sunrise,
And I have been waiting a quarter of an hour."
Sunup and Munford is determined to make the best
Of his trouble: he sends an adjutant back to halt
And regroup the sleepy wet stragglers; then he
Gathers his force and charges the Yankee pickets
And drives them every step of the way into their
Camp. Sunup and Stonewall Jackson smiles
And launches his infantry.

Morning and General Lee intends to engage the enemy
Near Glendale: at Riddle's Shop or Frayser's Farm.
Jackson's corps, alone in the Federal rear, is
To lance southward and sweep the blue fragments
Into the grinding stones of Longstreet and A. P.
Hill. Speed is essential, for McClellan is close
To the James, where heavy cannon of the gunboats
Will give him an umbrella of fire against
The Confederate rain. Morning and the eagle
Demonstrates tactics to the master of strategy:
Jerky and impetuous, Stonewall draws with the toe
Of his right boot on the ground where Lee stands
Two sides of a triangle; then, slowly and imprecisely,
The third. With a stamp of his foot, he says,
"We've got him" "I hope so," says Lee. Morning
And Jackson vaults into the saddle and rides with
The wind. Morning and with the Old Man personally
Driving their march, the veterans of the Valley
Gather in near Savage's Station prisoners of war—
Well and wounded. An officer remarks that the Yanks
Are too many and too willing to surrender,
But Stonewall Jackson replies: "Sir, it's cheaper
To feed them than to fight them." Morning and Roger
Tecknor exults in his herding skulking weaklings
Of the enemy to the rear: held in reserve at Gaines'
Mill, he had not felt the fiery breath of cannon
On his face, and if he swaggers unmercifully over
A fallen foe, he excuses himself with a footnote
To the general's statement: "It's braver to capture

Them than to kill them." Especially, his terror
Thinks, since they might kill me instead. Morning
And Sam Stover delights in the fabulous spoils:
Mountains of grain and rice, foothills of smoldering
Beef, moats of knee-deep molasses, bastions of burnt
Coffee, scorched just right for extra flavor;
Forests of axes, picks, and shovels.

War's a fishhook: mind the barb.
But when you can steal the bait
And run with it early or late,
Then a soldier's life is: Wow!
The riches of gear and chow!
Ah, it's a daisy, it's a darb.

War's a bearhug: mind the fang.
But when you can skin the hide
And wear it narrow or wide,
Then a soldier's life is: Whee!
The joy of the drunken spree!
Ah, it's a pistol, it's a bang.

Noon and Stonewall Jackson encharges D. H. Hill
To sweep up the prisoners and to collect the loot.
Noon and the eagle perches by a sandy swamp road
And scratches his feathered love call to Anna:
Fifty dollars must go to the church that God may
Bless the South with independence. Religion and duty
Are his real romance. Then the general observes
A bridgehead of danger: "This going home has injured
The army immensely." Furloughs of the flesh force
The spirit to accept a false armistice
With the enemy flesh has fought, and many an ideal
Has been abandoned for a warm bed, clean sheets,
And the honeyed arms of embrace. Thus the deacon
Of self-denial understands the cancer of time
Without victory and fears defeat from corruption
Within. He seals the letter and mutters his verse
For the day: "I came to bring not peace, but a sword."
Noon and Stonewall Jackson examines the borders
Of White Oak Swamp: the bog seems untraversable.
An ugly crescent of dark waters sprawls ten miles
Through thick hardwood jungle before spilling into

The Chickahominy. Bamboo, briars, and vines may
Yield passage, he thinks, but what of the pools
And marshes and their metal-sucking burial of guns?
Noon and the eagle and the owl consider the ground
With field glasses, while wisps of pale smoke
Among distant trees mark the firing of Yankee
Sharpshooters, who fell individual offerings to war
In the Rebel column gathering before the broken
Bridge. Death so casual, death so nonchalant cannot
Hurry the general in his estimate of the situation:
Precarious. Fords to left and to right of the bridge
May be crossed, but they are not mentioned in orders
From Lee. Noon and Stonewall Jackson weighs
His chances without artillery support—fords are
Improper crossings for the guns: and without them,
The balance dips disastrously against the army
Of the Valley. With a battery of Yankee artillery
Contesting Southern advance so well that a regiment
Of bluecoats sleeps secure in an abandoned field,
The eagle decides to drive off all impediments
To repairing the bridge: "Colonel Crutchfield, sir,
Bring up the guns!" But the colonel finds his detail
A difficult one: the low bluff of the Rebel position,
Overlooking the broken bridge, is exposed to enemy
Fire. For an hour or better Confederate engineers
And infantry sweat, swear, and slash a road through
A ravine, while gray cavelrymen parade as a screen
For the lumbering cannon. At last twenty-eight
Iron mouths belch murder in a row, spit in unison
Upon Federal troops in the wooded swamp, vomit
flame
And thunder with deadly accuracy. Still the Yankees
Do not panic, but hold their ground, and die
Where they remain.

O you historians yet to come; you who will note
With scholarly decorum the deeds of this war; you
Who will measure the genius of Jackson
With the sliderule of daring and odds overcome
By such skill as cannot be learned from a military
Textbook; you who will harp with the strings
Of primary sources upon the timidity of McClellan
And the lack of ruthless abandon in Lee,

Upon the sublime patience of the baked clay
In Lincoln and the brittle china of the temperamental
Davis; you who will wag sad heads over rewards
For incompetent Bragg and the wasted honors heaped
Upon Grant: remember to set you down this: once
Upon a hot summer day a few unknowns reddened
The swamps near Richmond with their courage and
kept
The invincible warrior of the South and the gray
Tide of his victory dammed up at a creek, while fish
Of the North swam freely downstream and escaped
The net that was cast for their capture. O you
Historians yet to come, here is a lesson too easily
Forgotten; remember it well: defeat is a matter
Of mind, a state of the will, and to die is never
The same as to lose, for the color of honor deeper
Than all citations is that of sacrificial human
Blood. Always Calvary and triumph.

"O damn the jungle, damn the sun,
And damn each heavy sinking gun,"
Thought Bradley Carleton as he pushed
Till even the braid on his rank was bushed
With weariness deeper than ravines of advance.
"And what if we can't make the Yankees dance
To the music we hurl at their hate?
Well, war is nothing but hurry up and wait:
Hurry up! hurry up! we may be late.
Too soon, too soon, now sit and wait."
And under the bluster of his official breath,
The major cursed silently the ways of death:
A private dropped by the half-cut planks,
A brigade blown wholemeal out of the ranks,
The corporal drowned with his kicking mount,
The sergeant missed at the evening count,
The captain turned wax by a surgeon's knife,
The colonel sniped smilingly beyond life.
And God, oh God, the pitiful young
Squashed like a pie of summer dung
That a clumsy cow has plopped a hoof in:
A Texas kid with that tomato grin
For the brittle cannon burst in two
And the ramrod iron that ran him through;

A Florida boy with his guts in his hand
And no right leg on which to stand
In the welling night that was his eyes;
An Arkansas stripling and the curdling cries
Of a sexless ghost crucified in hell
By a scrotum lopped with a blade of shell:
"Mama, oh Mama, please make me dead!"
A Louisiana cub and the hole in his head
Wide enough to swallow a loaf of bread
In place of the brains that draped a tree
As a flag for Jackson and victory—
That strange kind of Spanish moss
Which war hangs from its doublecross.

"And all for what?" the major wonders,
While his ten-gun battery thunders
Explosive hell at swamp and pine
And the hidden Yanks who hold their line.
"So that I may drive the truth away
And never look through the eye of day
On the love I bear for Agape?"
Then the major shouts commands to his men:
"Fire away steady! Volley again!"
While the lawyer inside whispers of fate
Crueler than war's hurry up and wait:
"When a man can't weather a personal storm,
He disguises his fury in a uniform;
When a man can't have his private will
By love or law, he marches out to kill—
And the reason for which he hurts and wrecks
Is to help to save the collective necks
Of those who obey neither love nor law.
Thus selfish fear is patriotic awe
For false ideals stitched to a rag
Become sacrosanct as a national flag,
And the motive of murder is sacrifice
Of moth-winged flesh to the flame of lice
Eating at humanity's gossamer soul
That what is torn may be called whole
By fools who will not question why
When nothing's to live for one must die
To prove that he can't possibly be wrong—
No more than shortness of life is long.

And so chaos is mankind's song
In answer to God's creation hymn:
Else why blow my brother limb from limb?"

Then his artist's vision answers him:
"Know you not by heaven above
That law is a poor substitute for love?
That law is only a compromise
Because man's heart is not love's size?
That nothing of beauty has any being
Apart from the eyes of proper seeing?
That every color depends upon lighting
And peace is not mere absence of fighting?"
While the cannon puff their clouds of snow
At the June sun, the major says, "I know."
"Why then," answers the artist, "are you afraid
Of marriage with flesh of a different shade
When her soul is pure as the God who made?"
The silence within finds growing room
Safe from the battery's uprooting boom
Till Bradley Carleton listens alone
To the sound of hammer and chisel on stone—
The epitaph to be laid at his head
For a world and a cause long dead, long dead.
Then his lance of prayer pierces clouds of snow:
"Agape, Agape, I love you so."

Two o'clock and Stonewall Jackson leads his brother-
In-law and Colonel Munford with two squads of cavalry
Across the timbered creek: attack on the Yankee guns
Will either clear the way or prove the necessity
For waiting. Two o'clock and enemy rifle fire drives
Off the general and his staff; suddenly tired,
The eagle perches under a tree and stares with heavy
Eyes at the cause of his delay. Mid-afternoon
And General Wright reports from Huger: "I have scouted
Along New Road, General, and have found no sign
Of Federals. What are your orders?" "None," says
Stonewall. "None?" "Federals are in that swamp
In such strength, sir, that I advise you to retrace

The safe route back to General Huger. Give him
My compliments—and let me sleep!" Mid-afternoon
And Stonewall Jackson does sleep, worn with fever
And the fear of possible ambush. Mid-afternoon
And D. H. Hill tries to get the bridge rebuilt,
But Yankee snipers kill so many Rebel workers
That the men refuse to expose themselves any longer,
Even though a brigade has crossed to screen them.
Four o'clock and Stonewall Jackson wakes with one
Dream still fresh behind his leaden eyes: do not
Spend blood to take today what will be given to you
Tomorrow—that is the true economy of war.
Four o'clock and Captain Fairfax arrives from
Longstreet: "The general has been alerted by your
Cannon fire and desires to know the exact state
Of affairs." For a moment the eagle wishes to let
The bull bellow for news in vain; then he decides
In favor of the simple truth: "Tell the general
That a heavy force of the enemy has halted me
At the bridge." Late afternoon and Colonel Munford
Returns with captured newspapers: "I have located
A trail leading to the south side of the swamp
And have tested it. I await your orders, sir."
"I have no orders, Colonel." Late afternoon
And fiery Wade Hampton, cavelry leader from South
Carolina, rides up to the taciturn commander:
"General Jackson, I have ridden far into the swamp
With a couple of my officers." Stonewall eyes
The aging falcon with a flicker of interest.
"In the pines, sir, just to the left of the roadway,
Is a crossing of the stream—narrow but firm."
"How narrow?" "Ten to fifteen feet wide, sir."
"Go on." "Well, just beyond this hidden crossing
Some Federal troops are resting in a ravine—
Apparently unaware of our immediate presence."
Late afternoon and Stonewall Jackson realizes
That *apparently* is not safe enough evidence. "Can
This hidden crossing be bridged?" he asks Hampton.
"Yes, sir." "Then please superintend such
Construction as you deem suitable." Early evening
And the irrepressible brigadier is back with his
Report: "The bridge is ready for your guns, sir—
And further, the enemy seems not to suspect

The vicinity of our assault." Early evening
And Stonewall Jackson is convinced: too many
Trails have been scouted with impunity, and now
A bridge has been built right under the Yankee noses.
Too easy deception not to indicate a well-planned
Ambush. Early evening and the eagle flies from
The falcon: not a single word of gratitude,
Commendation, or approval. Wade Hampton is left
To meditate upon madness in the victor of the Valley:
NO ORDERS sticks in his craw like a knife,
Shedding bad blood of bitter frustration.

Early evening and heavy firing south of the swamp:
The Battle of Frayser's Farm under flashing horns
Of the bull, but Stonewall Jackson is not to be
Pressured into the folly of the premature:
His artillery has failed to force a crossing
And finally quits firing, as a concluding punctuation
To his official report eight months later: "A heavy
Cannonading in front announced the engagement of
General Longstreet at Frazier's Farm, and made me
Eager to press forward; but the marshy character
Of the soil, the destruction of the bridge over
The marsh and creek, and the strong position of
The enemy for defending the passage, prevented
My advancing until the following morning."

Darkness and Stonewall Jackson sits with his staff
At a campfire. He falls asleep with a biscuit
Between his teeth, only to rouse boltingly and blink
About: "Gentlemen, let us get to bed, and rise early,
And see if tomorrow we can't do something." It has
Been the longest day of waiting in his military life.
Night and silence in camp, while out in the watery
Wilderness the frogs croak in chorus and the insects
Click their disappointment: no young carrion to blow
Into abhorring. Night and snickers rise like mist
About Roger Tecknor—he had nearly drowned
In crossing with the protective brigade: every shot
Had made him flop facedown in the creek. Night
And the fat man sobs under his soggy blanket of
shame:

Now ain't the Dodger wise, I say?
He lives to die another day.

8. Malvern Hill: The Bull's Blunder

Tuesday, July 1, 1862, brought miniature Gettysburg
To the peninsula, one year before that major battle:
The catastrophe in the tragedy which was this war.
Malvern Hill was prophecy of failure on that third
Day at the Pennsylvania crossroads, for Malvern Hill
Was frontal assault after artillery barrage,
And the result—the same as that attained against
The fishhook shank of Cemetery Ridge: mass murder
Of the Rebel infantry. And history, if it would
Record the truth, must note the irony involved:
Malvern Hill was Longstreet's plan; Pickett's futile
Charge, Lee's. And so an idol of America, an enigma
To epic poets, a delight to moralizing biographers
Proved short on memory or, worse yet, demanded
His will to compensate for failure to properly
Exercise that will—in fine, gained some small
Measure of revenge upon a chief subordinate as source
Of previous frustration: first, upon the eagle
For his delay at White Oak Swamp; second, upon
The bull for his failure to move in time to take
Little Round Top. And in each act the aristocrat
Of gentlemanly discipline found destruction of his
Aim the price for his lack of proper focus
On military motives: Jackson was guilty of discretion,
Longstreet of disobedience, and Lee punished himself
More than them because he would not discriminate
Between the two. No wonder the Commander of
The Army of Northern Virginia kept saying, "I am
Always wanting something." He knew—far better
Than his flatterers will dare admit—how much he
Lacked of perfect proportion. No, Marse Robert
Was not a god—merely man, with many of the ills
That attend on mortal greatness, flaws which show
The need for something higher than the self to save

The self from all the weaknesses that are the factual
Ground for the myth of apple and serpent,
Or in the case of a general, Achilles' vulnerable
Heel. Let enthusiasts revere the marble man,
The bronze rider, the statue without an aching heart,
The mysterious pillar of a nation—they never come
To understand the pearl of pain, the life which is
Disease, the sin that begs for grace, the soul
Who yearns to cleanse the blood he sheds
With the breath of God. Yes, Malvern Hill,
Gettysburg in miniature, was Longstreet's plan
And Lee's mistake of accepting such locked horns
In frontal rush instead of Jackson's matadoring
Dance and thrust along the flank. Yes, Malvern Hill
Was Longstreet's plan, and this is how the slaughter
Came about:

Up and moving early, Stonewall ordered stragglers
Forwarded for vanguard action. Though the Yankees
At the bridge had pulled away during the night,
The Valley army's march was not an easy one: thirst
Picketed the advance, for the enemy retreating had
Poisoned wells and springs so that Confederate
Tongues would choke the Rebel yell to death.
And as Sam Stover sent his wagons creaking off
With captured coffee, rice, and beans, he cursed
The bloody bastards who hade made him suck a stone
As chaser to the remedy he drank for fever
And the boiling sun:

Any son of a bitch who would fling
Bitter medicine into the water
Ought to have his ass in a sling
And a billy goat riding his daughter.

And though the lieutenant of supply delighted in
The sublimity of Sam's profane rage, Dr. Butler
Wade was too much in need of drugs to be amused
By the sergeant's blistering report on why
He had no anodynes for youth in agony:

I have respect for the Yank in hell
Who tries to shoot our men in the head

Or rip a bayonet into the belly,
But none for him whose guts are jelly,
Who kills the helpless and nearly dead
By drowning their hope in a wasted well.

While Stonewall Jackson sent Federal surgeon N. F.
Marsh, captured at Savage's Station, to Lee
For prisoner exchange, the Rev. L. W. Allen warned
D. H. Hill of unassailable Malvern. So impressed
With the briefing was the owl that he moaned:
"If McClellan is there in strength, we had better
Leave him alone." But the bull tossed his head
In scorning laughter, ripping at caution with sharp
Ivory tips of overconfidence: "Don't get scared,
Now that we have got him whipped." Thus Long-
street
Assumed what he did not prove, for his horns had not
Impaled McClellan: indeed, had the little Napoleon
Been worth his stars, his left wing would long
Before have meteored into Richmond, cometed round,
And encircled Lee with fire. But hysterical George,
General with "the slows," had made instead a beeline
Straight for the James and the safety of the Union
Gunboats, like a nervous lover, who, afraid to embrace
The object of his proposition, coldfoots it for his
Hat and the glittering knob of escape. No, by any
Standard of imagination, the Northern commander's
Retreat, though orderly, was nothing brilliant:
A child mature enough to keep his heart from panic
Could have led such elephantine force without
Disaster to the ignominy of being penned up
At Evelington Heights. And such a child might boast
Later on of how he fed the beast on peanuts
Of his own protective genius—the same sort of
Carnival McClellan staged for the edification
Of historians and the exasperation of the patient
Prairie lawyer, as yet unsure of his own ability
In the deadly chess of war. But if the child
Would scarcely choose Malvern as the place to make
A stand and force the enemy to play King of the Hill,
Neither would he yield so fatal a position once he
Saw how easily it could be held and used to draw
Deeply on the smaller capital of Confederate blood,

But the ex-railroad president was not a child
Who kept his heart from panic—and Winslow Adams
Could have told him how foolish it was to check
His bet on a winning hand, collect a meager pot,
And run to bank it on such a show of force
That the Southern gamblers decided to call for
A fresh deck and a new dealer in the blue-chipped
Poker of Second Manassas. But Winslow Adams was
Busy dodging shells in a wood and hadn't time
For cutting cards of strategy with McClellan.
The Old Man had said to Magruder, "My troops are
Fresher than yours." And since they were, Winslow
Adams had only time to outbluff death and shuffle
Safety for himself and Tommy Roule, who chewed on
Spears of grass to keep his teeth from chattering
His fear to the corporal newly come to be the idol
Of his boyish love. "Do you think we'll catch it
Heavy, sir?" Adams smiled and squinted down
His sights: "We or they, I guess. You know, kid,
War is like blackjack, and the Yanks are asking
To be hit." A lamp-post burst above the clearing,
And Winslow dug his brogans deeper into spongy
Earth while Tommy choked a strong impulse to
scream.
"The only thing I don't like about our trying
To break them is so many who will die in this strange
Twenty-one or under age." That's what the corporal
Felt but didn't say. Instead: "Relax, kid, it'll
Be a while yet before we move out to bang that hill."
Another lamp-post whammed flying steel at the edge
Of the wood, and Adams spat. "Goddam the gunboats
Anyway! You'd think the Union navy'd have more
Courtesy."

While Stonewall Jackson reconnoitered and helped
Push up the artillery, tense Marse Robert snapped
At Jubal Early: "Yes, he will get away because I
Cannot have my orders carried out!" A brief look
At Malvern makes one think it might have been
better
Had Lee given no order rather than the one he gave—
Consider the place well: it was the last vision
To darken on the eyes of many men. A crest rose 150

Feet above the lowlands, and on this ridge bristled
Row on row of Federal cannon. To the right,
A millpond covered the flank; to the left, artillery.
Skirmishers at the foot of the slope supported
Natural barriers of wood and stream—the Western
Run.
Regiment after regiment of Union infantry lay near
The guns, which could roar with hot authority over
A broad meadow and fields of wheat. To storm
The hill in front was whispering the thunder to be
Still. Yet Longstreet, returning from examination
Of the left, thought his whisper would be loud
Enough if backed by all available artillery: "General
Lee, I recommend we drive off the Union guns
And slam the infantry head on." And so the genteel
Circus master had the bull's advice. The eagle
Said, "Frontal assault will cost us dear. Why not
A flank attack by the right?" Why not indeed!
The answer, though easily discerned, is manifold
Complexity: Lee had been disappointed in the Valley
Conqueror's performance up to date, had recently
Protested Jackson's several dangerous flirtations
With Yankee shot and shell (Stonewall had flipped
The dust of death from a note and had had to raise
Sorrel from haunches of animal terror, while men
Dropped so close he could have touched them
In their grotesque attitudes of frozen pain),
And in his ride with the eagle to inspect the right,
Had stopped far short of what he should have seen.
Thus the Confederate commander let emotion
And the will to act for the sake of act betray
His finer logic for advantage by maneuver,
And that betrayal proved to be a Judas kiss upon
The face of D. H. Hill and five thousand Southern
Casualties, who bled away the night in screams
Or slept the sleep of death beneath the ghostly
Blanket of the waning moon: dark, dark and cold
The underside of life, where hope no longer keens
In charge above the ticking pulse of thought—
"Though others fall, this intricate image of myself
Will stand and trumpet back the wind that roars
The hour of my clockwork heart has struck to stop
The breath in one explosive fire alarm from hell."

Here then is a portrait of the tragedy at Malvern
Hill: the Rebel cannon, low on ammunition, went
Into action separately by individual batteries,
And for their challenge to Federal superiority were
Hammered into splinters of scrap metal.
Under the scorching blast of Union boom, Bradley
Carleton saw his men melt fast away—like rare snow
Upon plantation fields before a sudden shift
In weather. And it nearly drove him mad to see
Brave youth become red sausage in the grinder
Of McClellan's synchronized machine:

Knives of shrapnel have pierced my coat,
And a clot of earth has struck my head,
But the gunner of number one is dead,
And the rammer of three is minus a throat.

The Lieutenant will probably lose that arm;
Sergeant Reilly's down and Simpson too,
And the captain is missing half his crew—
Yet nothing seems labeled for my harm.

The Corsican, they say, at Waterloo
Begged death to come and take him in,
And if to pray to die be sin,
Then with Napoleon I am guilty too.

O how I wish that I could feel
Some lance of torment in my side!
But every Yankee shot now whistles wide,
And others catch the burning steel.

Why, why, O God, must others fall
Beneath this banging iron rain?
I bear so much of love's long pain
That I would quickly perish for them all.

Then the major jumped to take the place
Of the captain seared on his handsome face
With a brand of the North across his eyes.
"Goddamit, men, don't fire at the skies!
Let the bastards have it straight and true,
So they won't have a gun when we get through!"
And Bradley Carleton felt a tide of hate
Rise in his heart, though the hour was late

For wading into the Federal roar.
But he couldn't stand on the bloody shore
And watch the drowning of his helpless crews—
So he rammed the powder and lit the fuse,
And patched the broken and rallied their fight,
Till the merciful kiss of mothering night
Soothed her children into much needed rest,
And he could count death among his best
And wonder why murder through head and limb
Had refused to number a shell for him.

Had the shattering of Confederate artillery been
The only debit at Malvern Hill, Lee would have had
Little to reproach his tactics for—but misinformation
At three o'clock led Marse Robert to believe
His decision in favor of Longstreet's plan was right:
Thinking McClellan was in retreat, the Southern
Commander sent Magruder's men into boiling action.
D. H. Hill supported piecemeal, and the Rebel
Infantry was chopped to shreds. Ditches filled
With skulkers like swamps with fresh water
After heavy rain. Confusion blocked every avenue
Of support, and panic broke so many regiments into
Mass withdrawal that General Early became
separated
From his troops. Ewell, the lisping jaybird, swore
A marathon of fiery epithets and inched his columns
Forward to attack, but darkness fell on woods
And bogs before his men could join the owl's
In moaning messages of pain to stretcher bearers
Walking in sharp relief against a sky as bright
As noon with Yankee guns. And when the
cannonading
Sighed and shuddered into silence, the eagle,
Tight-lipped and calm behind his mask that would
not
Break to say, "I told you so," sat Sorrel and read
Dispatches from subordinates, who feared
An overwhelming rush of blue next morning.
On through the night, nauseous with screams from
D. H. Hill's slow-dying North Carolinians,
The brigadiers of Jackson fretted the repulse into
Disaster. Then at one o'clock, they dared to wake

The master of prediction. "No," he said. "I think
He will clear out in the morning." Then Stonewall
Turned to sleep again upon his pallet, certain
Of the information Stuart had given him.
And when he woke, he found his prophecy to stars
Of worry had come true: timid George had gone.

9. Northern Change Of Base

Dawn of July 2, 1862, brought fog and fine rain
To the area of serpentining rail fences, thick
Clumps of sassafras, dogwood, and blackberry—
The area where the owl's men fell like spring
Blossoms in a storm of hail. Youth lay stacked
In cords of death along the fences, and some sat
Rigidly erect upon the rails—the extreme penalty
They had to pay for the blunder of the bull.
And as Willis Hyatt moved with the eagle's advance
Over open fields, he saw file on file of broken,
Soggy gray dolls facedown on useless muskets—
Eloquent mute testimony of the efficiency of Union
Batteries. Suddenly the poet felt hot tears along
His heart for all the waste of infinite possibilities
Denied to life so silent in the frozen gestures
Of such grotesque agony: a boy of golden hair lay
Turtled on his elbows and his knees, his stomach
Shot away, like a child about to rock himself
To sleep; a graybeard on his back stared blindly
At his stiffly elevated legs, his right hand clutching
The hole which once had been his pump of love
And laughter; a thin-mustached lieutenant, missing
Half his head of brown curls, offered two bouquets
Of earth and grass, torn out at roots, to the rain-
Veiled monstrance of the hidden sun. Then a cold
Blade of nausea cut Willis Hyatt in his vitals,
And prickly lights swam before his eyes, and sweat
Ran in streams from his armpits, and his knees
Turned to water: soon he was heaving up his
wretched
Breakfast of hardtack and coffee. "Thank God," he
Muttered as he wiped his face upon his gray sleeve,

"I'm on the picket line today and not a member of
The burial brigade."

Matti, my heart's a bloody fool:
Matti, send my heart to school
In the quiet wood of the moaning dove,
And there let it learn of your love—
That love which recited her lesson plain:
"Love alone is master of pain."
Matti, my heart's a thorn of regret:
Matti, teach my heart lest it forget
Your comfort of truth in this deadly rain:
"Love alone is master of pain."

Winslow Adams rejoiced at knowing
That Tommy Roule was not for mowing
By ghostly sickles over the bog,
And as he dug in the heavy fog
Burial trenches for the strengthless dead,
He turned to the pimple-faced kid and said:
"See what I told you?—no need to fret,
And I'll add another five to the bet
That if you're on the skirmishing line
One day, the next will be better than fine,
So far as your personal safety goes.
Well, the Yanks have gone, and it only shows
That danger is never so bad as it seems:
Reality hurts far less than dreams."
Then the gambler took a second look:
The kid sagged and his shoulders shook
As he hid his face on his shovel handle,
And Winslow felt a slender candle
Of grief burning hot on his inner wrist.
For a moment he stared at the curtain of mist;
Then he lifted the veil from Tommy's soul
And probed the wound of a love once whole
With a voice thick and quick to falter:
"Kid, I know how—but forget about Walter.
No matter how much—you can't—it's bad—
You've got to be brave for your mom and dad.
You're the only one—you're all they have:
You mustn't cry yourself into the grave."
Tommy shivered and sobbed, "I know.

But Corporal, sir, I loved him so,
And Mom and Dad have got each other,
But Walter, you see, was my only brother—
And now he's dead, and there can't be another."

Suddenly Adams tasted the sour mother
Welling up from his applepress heart;
Then he spat the vinegar and made a start
To care for someone more than himself,
Though he knew that taking love from the shelf
He had built to store away possible pain
Was merely asking to suffer again.
("Christ, every time I give my heart
To man or woman, we have to part,
And whenever I offer a helping hand,
The beggar is quick to misunderstand
The cause of my gift and think it a loan,
And wonder what I expect for my own
In return—as though every kiss on the face
Leads to a good swift kick in the ass.")
But Tommy was in such debt to sorrow
That Winslow forgot the bankrupt morrow
When he might not be able to borrow
Hope from somebody dearer than dear—
So he bought more chips in the game of fear
And covered the kid's wild bumping bet,
Certain of the cold loss and the hot regret.

"Listen, kid, and remember me well:
Though you wander lost in the fires of hell,
I'm with you, see, as long as you want—
So let's hear no more of how you *can't.*
What a man *must* do he finds he *can* do,
And I'll help you out till earth turns blue
And the sky a sickly green—
Just one request: don't think me *keen.*
And that silly shit about calling me *sir*—
Well, it sticks in my ears like a cocklebur.
To you I'm *Win* (as I often do),
And brothers we are, and we'll see war through
To the final shot and the banging end
As man and man, friend and friend.
Now square your shoulders and lift your head,

And dig a home for the waiting dead."
"Yes, sir," said Tommy. Then an awkward grin
Broke through his tears: "Sorry, Win."

Meanwhile in the Poindexter Home Old Jack, who had
Answered an inquisitive staff officer about
The burial detail with: "Because I am going to attack
Here presently, as soon as the fog rises, and it
Won't do to march troops over their own dead, you
Know," warmed his hands before a fire and said
To General Lee: "The enemy is fleeing in disorder—
Now's the time to maul him good." "Bad, you mean,"
Said Lee, with a sigh. "But I'm afraid that it is
We who have been mauled." Then as Marse Robert
Turned to dictate a dispatch to an aide, the eagle
Spread his wings as though to embrace the fire:
Cold silence of his superior's refusal had iced him
Beyond immediate thaw. He perched on the arm
Of a chair, blinked at the licking flames, and his
Eyes mirrored bright hell inside. Then his wet
Feathers ruffled at the bellow of the bull, sloshing
Into the room from the breaking of heaven outdoors:
"General, are you sending anyone to Richmond today?"
Lee stopped his mellow dictation: "Yes, an orderly
Will set out soon; can we do anything for you?"
"Yes, send Mrs. Longstreet word I am alive yet;
She is up at Lynchburg." For a moment Stonewall
Wished Old Peter were a private under him—imagine
Treating his commander like an office boy!
Ah, the eagle thought, how the bull can kill off
Men by the thousands, yet refuse his mate the time
For a line or two of life! Then the circus master
Cracked a gentle whip: "Oh, General Longstreet,
Will you not write yourself? Is it not due to your
Good lady after these tremendous events?"
While Jackson clawed a bitter observation in his
Soul ("One would think so."), the bull scratched
A hasty note—ink darkened after the flow of human
Blood.

Someday, somewhere,
My handsome friend,
You will regret the extra care
With which you tend
Each horn's sharp ivory end.

The beast will cow
His keeper man:
Destroy he must, I know not how—
Protect every plan.
He will gore if he can.

Never let him know
Your hand can shake:
One hesitation to enforce, and oh!
This bull will break
Your dream with a quake.

"General," the mellow voice was saying, "has your
Morning's ride led you to see anything of the scene
Of awful struggle of the afternoon?" The scratching
Of the bull had ceased: "Yes, General, I rode over
Pretty much of the line of fighting." "What are
Your impressions?" "I think you hurt them about
As much as they hurt you." "Then I am glad we
Punished them well, at any rate," said Lee.
The mask of Jackson cracked into a thin smile:
The gentlemanly irony was delicious. Longstreet,
In the dumps over bad weather and exhausted troops,
Blinked dumbly at the joke and waded out in his wet
Uniform: the clouds inside were worse than those
Spilling new rivers across the peninsula. Then
As the eagle spread his dampened wings once again
And looked for some swift flight to victory
In the fanning flames, he heard sharp surprise
Heighten the pitch of the mellow voice: "President,
I am delighted to see you." Jackson jumped
From his perch and glowered at the fine but brittle
China doll, who was most responsible for the drowning
Of Confederate hope outside. Jefferson Davis,
In the company of his brother, Colonel Joseph, had
Just dropped in from personal reconnaissance
For that which would restore Southern morale: good

Whiskey. After the chief executive had shook hands
With Lee, he eyed about until his gaze came to rest
Upon the tacky genius, who stood at stiff attention,
His taloned fingers biting into palms tense
With refusal of such courtesy: ("This earth,
Which has the final say on every plan, is fine,
Too fine, for the coarse demands of soul-shattering
Decision: the plow of sacrificial daring breaks
Too easily such soil, and too little of the texture
Of the personal self will cling to the bright blade
Which would prepare the furrow for the sowing
Of success—so the seed rots.")

I do not like your brittle air
Or the thrust of your lantern jaw,
You china doll of the fine and the fair:
Stubbornly delicate beauty's a flaw.

A flaw which already has cost us dear
In the extra blood which is delay,
For your mind is a jealous maiden's fear
That drives all conquering suitors away.

I do not like your porcelain smile
Or your trumpet ear cocked to flattery:
Such small need has fed file after file
Of men to the big hunger of an enemy battery.

Yes, Jefferson Davis, scholar of law
And master of textbook assault,
Your brittle air is a stubborn flaw,
Your lack of vision—a disastrous fault.

For he who would win a war must forget,
Along with the rules, his stake in the game—
Cast all that he is, with no chance of regret,
In uncertain hope larger than faith in his fame.

"Why, President," said Lee, embarrassed at the
silent
Staring, "Don't you know General Jackson? This is
Our Stonewall Jackson." Seeing that the hard-eyed
Eagle was in no mood for intimate exchange,
The china doll bowed in stiff recognition merely.
Old Jack saluted and kept mum, his tight mouth

More than eloquent in rejection of the man who would
Not countenance the fall of the Yankee Capital
From fear of losing Richmond.

"And is there no way by which we can get at them?"
Asked the President. "None that I can find," said
Lee. "Our artillery, inferior from the start, has
Been pounded hard and is in no condition to contest
The Federal gunboats; we are low on ammunition,
And our men lack freshness for assault; even
The weather has conspired to help McClellan now—"
Lee paused to let the Presidential ears record
Torrential drumming on the roof. "And if the Union
Army is regrouping for a new maneuver from its change
Of base, then it is better that we wait to see
What such development entails." Thus did the circus
Master tick away the precious time of swift pursuit
With classical reasons for caution and delay.
Convinced by the logic of Lee's text, the china doll
Turned nevertheless to a minority report from
Eccentric genius, so obviously at odds with
The entire campaign: "And what is your opinion,
General Jackson?" The eagle looked as though his
Mountain nest had just been robbed by clumsy hunters
Whom he would wing, beak, and talon down sheer cliffs
To the rumbling gorge below: every instinct of his
Military being swooped in the feathered fury of
Rebellion: "They have not all got away if we go
After them; my experience with a retreating enemy
Says that he is beaten until he proves otherwise.
I venture to believe that change of base for new
Maneuvers is the farthest thought from McClellan's
Rodent mind—he is a half-drowned rat seeking his
Hole along the James." What Stonewall said was true
Enough, but his superiors had decided on a waiting
Game, and so the army of the Valley moved five miles
Through mud in two days of the heavy rain which fell
With chills and fever in their weary hearts.

10. Strange Truce Among The Blackberries

Dawn buds into rose-petaled clouds and blossoms
In beauty over the peninsula: it is the blood-stained
86th anniversary of a dream: that man can be free
And equal with his brother. And now that dream,
Red gossamer silk spun by the heart to wear better
Than iron, is raveling out at the edges—like
A battleflag nipped by an enemy bullet: rain
Of quick riches has set fine teeth of slow rot
To the threads, and the sun of green-sowing wealth
Has bleached them whiter than the face of a dollar
Bill. Only further transfusions from the blue-
Flanked elder brother in the family at war with
Itself can pump fresh color and strength into
That once-proud pennant, which flapped
With protective thunder over the grave of Patrick
Henry and his eternal challenge to the living:
GIVE ME LIBERTY—OR GIVE ME DEATH!

Fourth of July and the big guns are silent, their
Brass-O mouths tired of the constant belching of
Iron from bellies hot with gaseous powder; Fourth
Of July and the exhausted armies stare at each other
Like enchanted beasts poised for the kill, but neither
One moving to break that unseen locking of eyes,
That invisible linkage of instinctive delay,
Which is the hypnosis following the prowl
And the first frenzied attempts at predatory murder:
Fourth of July and Stonewall Jackson shatters
The sleep of his sluggish subordinates and tempers
Off without any breakfast the tardy guides for
The still-in-bed jaybird; Fourth of July and the rest
Of the staff suffers the slashing beak of the eagle
For failure to comply with his order to move at
dawn;
Fourth of July and obedient Jim stores away food
Enough for a picnic and pours out coffee to the last
Dark ground: the boss is madder than hell.

Lawdy Jesus, jes lissen to de thunner
Ole Jack's arattlin dis mohnin:
He's stohmin de genruls and kernels unner

With crahs mo awful dan a woman abohnin!

Ain't recomembrin him shout quaht dis away,
But, Lawdy Jesus, he one big frahtnin ack
When sodjer fohks dozen do what he say—
Eben Genrul Yuwl no gonna eat—da's a fack!

Fourth of July and balding Dick doesn't eat until
One o'clock, for the mad man from the Valley catches
Him between the blankets and, before the ringing
Ears of the staff, launches into independent
Celebration with a private brand of fireworks
That leaves the executive officer smoldering like
A piece of punk all day. Fourth of July and the bull
Urges assault, but the circus master, cautious
After the goring at Malvern, prefers to ride with
The eagle to inspect every foot of the front—
Their glasses reveal no means of attack: the flanks
Along the ridge at Evelington Heights are well
Covered, and the entire Union army enjoys lamp-post
Protection from the gunboats. Fourth of July
And the half-drowned rat of Jackson's prediction
Has found his hole along the James, his course
To safety made easier by the adolescent directions
Of blundering Beauty Stuart. Fourth of July
And Marse Robert chews on a bitter thought above
The grass-cropping head of Traveller: "Under ordinary
Circumstances the Federal army should have been
Destroyed." Fourth of July and heat hangs thicker
Than sweat on the lowlands, but cold, cold is
The mind of Stonewall Jackson: he knows that war
Is never ordinary and that men make their own
Circumstances. And now he sees the several causes
For Lee's regret: not only miserable maps to complain
And woefully inadequate staff work—but misuse
Of cavalry at moments of crisis; artillery
Improperly employed; too much trust in erring
Subordinates; little personal tactical genius;
And, worst of all, that fatal flaw—failure
To enforce the will of command when military logic
Demands enforcement. Fourth of July and the big sun

Hotter than the cartridge of a Roman candle,
But cold, cold is the mind of Stonewall Jackson—
Action in the field has shown him the weakness
Of Lee: handsome he is, saintly he is, and men will
Obey their idolatrous nature. Yet—and this *yet*
Is ice in the veins of the eagle—the man will waver,
The man will excuse, for the man lacks the ruthless
Discipline of victory: a gentleman is not the fit
Master of battle. Fourth of July and Rebel pickets
Play host to inquisitive Yankees in the blackberry
Patches—warm, warm the exchange of news, coffee,
Tobacco, and laughter: but cold, cold is the mind
Of Stonewall Jackson.

We are farther away from Washington town
Than when the campaign first began;
Twenty thousand of our best are down,
And we can scarcely replace a single man.

Now, Fourth of July, shine on the lost
And set fire to the china doll's mind:
Dry straw must be made to see the cost
Of such stalemate—invading death is more kind.

More kind because its blood carries hope
Into the heart of To-Dare-Is-I-Can:
When, when, will expand the narrow scope
Of the timid, and I move North with my plan?

Move North, move North, I certainly must
To carry war into the Yankees' front yard
That handsome flesh turned honorable dust
May not grieve in the dark of: Too Hard.

While the little hammer, Charles Martel,
Prayed to keep Southern souls from hell,
And Dr. Wade lay in exhausted rest
(Cold diamond rose and fell on his breast)
After twenty-four hours of wielding the knife—
Roger Tecknor, puppydog grateful for life,
Plucked blackberry bushes ripe in the sun,
Ever ready at a moment's notice to run
If the Yankees decided to end the truce.
While Sam Stover felt his fragrant mouth juice
As he broiled a recently slaughtered steak

(After all, it was time he got a good break
From hauling supplies for the Rebel clan:
Holiday compliments from the Old Man),
While Willis Hyatt sat leaning on a tree,
His heavy ledger balanced on a knee,
And wrote a love ballad to Matti's eyes,
A merry mouth whistled to brilliant skies
And upped his bet in a sassafras patch,
Then lit a cigar with a Northern match
As the sweating man in blue with three jacks
Called and wondered if the great ax
Of a club flush would fall—
It did, and Winslow Adams made another haul
At the expense of the enemy, now friend,
In the war of cards that knows no end.
And as stars winked out this Fourth of July
On Bradley Carleton's heart-sick cry
For the captain, who would never see again,
The gambler said, "That does it, men.
I guess you're broke, so it's time to quit,
But please remember I enjoyed every bit
Of the give and the take we had—
And though you lost, don't go away mad:
Perhaps somewhere after another fight
We can get together for poker all night."
Then the merry mouth whistled for the waiting kid
And blew the lantern out. Soon they were hid
In the darkness of their own exultant laughter,
For not a Yank dared to give chase after.
"Here, Tommy, take this fistful of money
And send it home. If you've a special honey,
Here's some extra to buy her a dress
Or something more intimate—yes! yes! yes!"

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